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What do we know about children's use of online technologies?: a report on data availability and research gaps in Europe [annex]

Report

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What Do We Know About Children's Use of Online Technologies? A Report on Data Availability and Research Gaps in Europe

Annex F Country reports

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Austria

Overview of national research

The research situation in Austria is characterised by a small number of studies and the available material predominantly consists of representative/quantitative data which concentrate mostly on access and usage - aspects such as frequency, location or purpose of Internet use. Qualitative data on how children and adolescents get along in virtual areas and how they deal with offers and applications of the Internet are rare. Beyond that it can be noted that children under 10 years of age are rather under-represented in the available findings.

Main features of national regulation

National regulation of the RTR (The Regulatory Authority for Telecommunications and Broadcasting) in Austria is said to be a bit lax. In contrast, the following four instruments of self-regulation of the Internet Service Providers Austria (ISPA), that has more than 200 members, do work: A code of conduct for providers, a hotline for reporting illegal content online, a domain-administration (nic.at), and a code of conduct for accountability and the obligation for Internet providers to give information.

National research status

Up to the present time in Austria, 14 studies have been found and put in the data repository. The studies and findings can be roughly divided into the following groups:

a) Market-focused commercial studies (as observation instruments). The studies and findings of this group can be assigned to market research/desk research and often serve, according to their own definition, as “continuous observation instruments of the Internet market”. Research within this group concentrates on access to the Internet, frequency and purpose of usage. The data are collected with quantitative surveys such as computer assisted telephone interviews (CATI) (one study uses CAPI - computer assisted personal interviews), and the sample size is mostly large or representative. However, all these studies focus on the usage of individuals aged 14 years or older and there are only a few aspects and results for the relevant group of 14- to 19-year olds that can be deduced. Thus it appears that there are overall only a small number of usable and relevant results. The studies are conducted by market research institutions, and the clients who commission research can be associated with the media sector and the range of information services which use the data in order to survive better in competition with traditional and new markets. Some of the research conducted by the research institutions is not commissioned but can be used by potential customers to extract so-called ‘individual exclusive questions’. This means that clients, for example from the media sector, can pay the institutions to incorporate special questions to which they want answers into such surveys, etc.

b) “Non-commercial” contract research/Multi-topic studies. Research within this group predominantly consists of multi-topic studies, a common feature of which is that the Internet use of children and young people is researched as only one aspect of these studies. Topics are access to and usage of the Internet, particularly gender-specific differences in usage, popular uses and applications and, sporadically, attitudes towards the Internet and online competencies and skills; two of the studies in this group deal with exposure to so-called problematic content, another is concerned with parents' awareness of online risks. The data are mostly collected by means of quantitative interviews (computer-assisted face to face interviews) or paper self-completion or online surveys. The sample size within this group is usually large and often representative (only one is not). Both children and young people are considered, although the majority of the studies concentrate on young people; in some of them, however, young adults aged 25 to 30 and parents are reflected as well. Similar to the

studies in Group 1, it seems that at least some results for the age group relevant to this project can be deduced. The studies are usually carried out by market research institutions or other research establishments. In contrast to the market-focused commercial studies, the clients in this group can be assigned to non-profit or social-profit organisations, for instance Ministries, youth organisations, educational institutes, etc. Research institutes are paid to conduct these studies, the clients however do not profit from them commercially.

c) Quantitative studies in the context of university research. Research within this group is carried out in the context of university research, either in research projects or in masters' theses. Topics of the studies are access to and usage of the Internet by children and young people, motives for being online, favourite applications of, and attitudes towards, the Internet (also in the context of gender-specific differences). The data are collected by quantitative surveys (paper self-completion), the sample sizes vary between 100 and 200 persons, and young people are slightly over-represented compared to children. Two of the studies were conducted by individuals in the context of masters' theses; another, however, was carried out by scientists and students, because it was part of a research project. The research conducted for masters' theses was privately financed, whilst the study within the research project was funded by the university.

d) Qualitative studies (partially multi-method design). The studies in this group are all carried out with the help of qualitative research methods, whereas the majority have used multi-method designs. The research concentrates on how children get along in virtual areas, how they deal with online offers and applications, what experiences, desires and expectations they have, and what attitudes towards the Internet they have. Another point of interest is how online competencies and skills are acquired. One study deals with gender differences in online experiences and preferences. The data within these studies are collected by means of qualitative guided interviews; in addition to that group discussions and retrospective think aloud protocols are used. Sample sizes are rather small, which is not uncommon for such investigations, and children are taken into consideration more than in other groups of studies. There are two types of funding: Two of the studies were carried out in the context of research for masters' theses and therefore funded by individuals, another was commissioned and funded by a non-profit organisation.

The disciplines involved can rarely be identified; there are studies that can be associated with educational sciences, communication studies, social sciences, etc. Topics

Common topics were:

Online-access: Five studies dealt with access to the Internet, two of which can be attached to Groups 2 and 3 respectively, and one to Group 4.

Usage/frequency of usage: Results concerning this topic originate from eight studies altogether, the majority of the data from which can be attached to studies from Groups 2 and 3, and one each to studies from Groups 1 and 4, respectively.

Used offers, contents and activities: Seven studies dealt with this topic, and the majority of the results originate from studies in Groups 2 3. One study is connected to Group 1 and another to Group 4.

Opinions about, and attitudes towards, the Internet: The results concerning this topic originate from three studies, two of which can be assigned to Group 3 and one to Group 4.

Online-competencies and skills: Four studies were dealt with this topic; three of them can be assigned to Group 4 and one to Group 1.

Risks: The results on this topic originate from three studies, which are all part of Group 3.



Parents' Internet experiences were not that common; nevertheless, several studies did deal with that topic:

Parents' online competencies and skills: One of the Group 2 studies dealt with this aspect. No more data exist.

Parents' knowledge of children's practices online and problematic contents: This topic did not receive much attention either. Again only one Group 2 study provided results concerning this aspect.

Parents' styles of regulation of children's use: This topic received more attention with results from three studies, one from each of Groups 2, 3 and 4.

The studies and/or reports are mostly available online; some studies do not provide reports, but summaries and publicly accessible information and results exist. Some of the research was conducted in the context of masters' theses.

As regards gaps, the research situation in Austria is insufficient on several levels. On the one hand there is a deficiency of research topics: While online access, usage, frequently used offers, applications, contents and activities are quite well researched, data concerning attitudes towards the Internet and online risks, problematic contents, and the online competencies and skills of parents are very rare. Some results on these topics do, nevertheless, exist, but they originate from a very small number of studies because of the lack of other studies on these topics – in some cases there is only one study on a particular topic. The few that do exist often become obsolete since results from the year 2001 are less meaningful for such a fast moving communication media as the Internet. Furthermore, there are no studies dealing with the role of the Internet as a learning tool, as a possibility for public commitment and participation, or as a place for identity play. Neither is there any research on the meaning of online games for users. A further deficiency is the small number of studies and findings as a whole. Despite taking into consideration masters' theses, only 14 studies that matched the requirements for being put in the data repository could be found.

Considering the high Internet penetration in Austria, it is surprising that more findings are not accessible. It is necessary to keep in mind, however, that there are several more studies that have collected data concerning the Internet usage of young people, which could not be included in the repository, since the data and results are not publicly accessible. It might be possible to acquire these studies but the cost of a single study would amount to thousands of Euros. Even taking these into consideration, however, would not change the lack of studies and findings as a whole.

At the level of research methods, an imbalance between quantitative and qualitative methods can be noted. Quantitative, often representative, studies that concentrate on access and usage data are in the majority. There are hardly any qualitative inquiries that concern, for example, how children deal with online offers and applications, just like studies with a multi-method design. Studies that combine quantitative and qualitative research methods do not exist at all.

A final deficiency can be identified in the age groups examined within the studies. Children under 10 years of age are rather under-represented in the available research. In the more numerous quantitative studies particularly mainly older children or adolescents are considered, whilst younger ones are reflected in qualitative studies.

All in all, the research situation in Austria, in particular the number of studies and findings, hardly reflects the great importance of the Internet in the everyday life of children and young people.

Belgium

Overview of national research

Although Belgium has been involved in several international research projects, the majority of Belgian research on young people and the Internet is sub-national. Empirical academic research on the online practices of young people is mostly to be found in Flanders.

In general, research on young people and the Internet is split into a more fundamental academic approach, funded by the universities and research foundations, and a more applied academic approach, funded by public organisations and institutions.

Studies on youngsters in secondary education are the best represented. Far fewer studies on young children's Internet use can be found.

A purely quantitative approach in the form of survey research is slightly dominant, although the combined research approach, mixing quantitative with qualitative methods of data collection, is also well represented.

Researchers from different social science backgrounds are studying the online practices of young people. Although media and communication scholars are prominent leaders in this field of research, sociologists, psychologists and pedagogues, sometimes involved in interdisciplinary research projects, are also studying young people's engagement with the Internet.

The research topics dealt with are predominantly aimed at getting a clear overview of the access to the Internet, online usages, interests and activities of young people.

The spectrum of risks that has been studied so far remains rather narrow. Particular interest has been shown in the invasion of young people's privacy by commercial firms (spam), the commercial exploitation of children online, the exposure of children to harmful content, the awareness of computer security, cyber-bullying, cyber-harassment and cyber-stalking among peers and in the broader social risks (e.g. digital divide).

In Belgium, there is no real tradition of effects research that studies and measures the impact of the Internet on young people's behaviour and attitudes. Research into more content-related issues of the Internet, online games, identity experiments and learning opportunities and/or risks also remains underdeveloped.

Main features of national regulation

This is currently being studied by a research group of jurists as part of a research project called TIRO-project (Teens, ICT, Risks and Opportunities).

National research status

Recently and in the past, Belgium has been involved in several international research projects. The majority of the Belgian research on young people and the Internet, however, remains national and, more particularly, sub-national. In Belgium, which consists of a French speaking (Wallonia), a Dutch speaking (Flanders) and a small German speaking community, most of the studies on the online practices of young people focus on young people living in only one Belgian community (Flanders or Wallonia). Even when Belgium is considered or involved in an international research project, the focus is still on one part of the Belgian population, that is the French or Dutch speaking Belgian population. The young people in the



German speaking community of Belgium are not visible in the research. There are very few national studies which zoom into the total Belgian population and discuss the online practices of all Belgian kids, Walloon and Flemish. Even the national statistics on the ICT usage of Belgians (from 15 years old) are split between the Walloon and Flemish population.

Empirical academic research on the online practices of young people is mostly to be found in Flanders. This does not mean that at the universities and research institutions in Wallonia there is no interest in the Internet and young people. However, the Walloon interest in the online practices of young people seems to be embedded in a research tradition which discusses children's Internet uses from a more theoretical point of view.

In general, research on young people and the Internet is split into a more fundamental academic approach, funded by the universities and research foundations (both federal and regional), and a more applied academic approach, funded by public organisations and institutions. Sometimes these public institutions have more economic goals (e.g. Institute for Broadband Technology in Flanders) and favour consumer-oriented research projects which aim concretely for more 'user-friendly' technologies (e.g. usability research). Most public institutions, however, are more citizen-oriented and are interested in how the rights, integrity and development of young people might be violated, disabled or enabled by the Internet.

In particular, the consumer rights organisation OIVO-CRIOC, which plays an important part in the Belgian Safer Internet Programme in co-operation with Child Focus, the European Center for Missing and Sexually Exploited Children that was founded in Belgium in the aftermath of the Dutroux-crisis, is the funding initiator of large-scale surveys among Belgian young people (both Flemish and Walloon) on their Internet and mobile phone use. However, in the public discussion of young people and the Internet and among stakeholders, it is the market research company Insites with its so-called Youth Online reports (not publicly available unless paid for) that is regarded as an 'expert' on young people and ICT.

Most studies focus on young people in the broad sense of the word, meaning that they not only try to create a better understanding of the online practices of minors, but also of young adults (18 – 25 years old). The age of the children in just one of these studies can range from toddlers to young adults. However, most studies zoom in on either children in primary education, teenagers in secondary education or young adults (students and working people). Studies on youngsters in secondary education (teenagers and adolescents) are the best represented. Far fewer studies on young children's Internet use can be found.

In the Belgian research on young people's online practices the purely quantitative approach in the form of survey research is slightly over-represented. Far fewer studies are based on an exclusively qualitative research approach. However, the combined research approach, mixing quantitative with qualitative methods of data collection, is also well represented. In practically all Belgian research projects, the children themselves are solicited to talk about, report and reflect on their online experiences. Sometimes, parents and teachers are also asked to share their attitudes and views in relation to (their) children and the Internet, but always in the capacity of parent or teacher, and not as the mouthpiece of their children.

The survey studies are in most cases representative of only one Belgian community (either the Dutch or the French speaking community). Most surveys are paper and pencil surveys, conducted in schools (based on clustered and stratified samples) and self-completed by the children or teenagers, often in the presence, or under the supervision, of their teacher, sometimes in the presence of the researcher. The size of the samples ranges from a minimum of 300 to 2200 children.

In the case of the qualitative studies most research projects are based on in-depth interviews with children. Only very few studies have an ethnographic, interpretative or constructivist approach, aiming for a contextualised in-depth understanding of children's Internet use in



everyday life, and of the way the Internet is shaping the social dynamics in family and school life.

The multi-method research projects mainly combined a large-scale survey conducted in schools with a small number of in-depth interviews. In most of these studies the in-depth interviews were conducted after the survey research, in order to get a more profound understanding of the larger patterns of Internet use and attitudes. In Belgium several social science disciplines are involved in the research on children and the Internet. Researchers in university departments of media and communication studies, sociology, psychology and pedagogy, sometimes working together on interdisciplinary research projects, are studying the online environment young people are living in and dealing with. Media and communication scholars show a special interest in access (and non-access), uses (and non-uses), appropriation, skills and consequentiality of ICT in the life of young people. Sociologists are more interested in social inequality, stratification and social pressure in relation to ICT. Pedagogues are particularly interested in the unsafe aspects of Internet and computer use, and how teachers (should) cope with these risks.

The research topics dealt with in the Belgian studies are predominantly aimed at getting a clear overview of the access to the Internet, online usages, interests and activities of young people. In the absence of one public available and regularly updated statistical overview of young people and the Internet (there are of course the statistics of the State Service of Statistics, but these report only on young people from 15 years on), most of the studies invest much in describing how many young people are connected to the Internet, how they got connected to the Internet, how they use the Internet, how often and how heavily they make use of the Internet, which particular activities and interests they show when they go online, and how differences among young people might correlate with their socio-demographic background. The differences among young people are very often discussed in terms of gender or education. The approach is mainly behaviouristic, describing what young people are doing (based on self-reports), rather than understanding what the Internet means for them and how it is embedded into their everyday life.

For many years the focus has been on the opportunities of the Internet and of other ICTs. It is only a few years since interest in the risks and dangers of the Internet has started to guide the agenda of researchers from different social science disciplines. Often at the demand of the government or in close connection and co-operation with organisations that, in the Belgian context of acute alertness to paedophile crimes and children's rights, aim for better protection of children and young people, more interest is shown in the risks posed by the Internet. The spectrum of risks that has been studied so far remains rather narrow. Particular interest has been shown in the invasion of young people's privacy by commercial firms (spam), the commercial exploitation of children online, the exposure of children to harmful content, computer security awareness, cyber-bullying, cyber-harassment and cyber-stalking among peers, and in the broader social risks (e.g. digital divide). The approach to risks is based on self-reports in which young users are asked to say whether they have ever encountered or committed risky behaviour on the Internet.

Although the focus is on children's and teenagers' views, a few studies also have investigated the awareness, concerns, attitudes and skills that parents and teachers show and express in relation to the Internet (e.g. parental control, regulation, awareness of risks). Equally, young people themselves are often asked to report or reflect on the role of their parents and teachers in their online usage practices.

In more recent studies particular interest is shown in the online literacy of young people. Again, these findings are based on self-reports in which the respondents are asked to estimate and to describe their online skills. The focus is on technological and computer literacy, rather than on informational skills.



A large number of the Belgian research projects can be retrieved online. Very often, a print version, summary or part of the research project (dissertation, article in journal, chapter in book) can be found. Most studies, however, are written in Dutch or in French. A smaller number of the studies have also been published in international (that is written in English) journals.

Unlike the neighbouring country, the Netherlands, there is no real tradition of effects research that studies and measures the impact of the Internet on young people's behaviour and attitudes. Although in the public debate there is great concern about the detrimental effects of the Internet on young people's development, wellbeing and safety in psychological, sexual and educational terms, there are only a few concrete examples of Belgian studies that are empirically interested in the way the Internet is affecting these aspects of young people's lives. If effects are discussed, this is done in a rather theoretical way, reflecting on the long-term consequences of the Internet for children and teenagers.

Research into more content-related issues of the Internet (e.g. strategies that young people develop to retrieve information, ways of interpreting online content, ways of creating content) also remains underdeveloped.

The growing success of online games and the equally growing anxiety about young gamers in the public debate, has not yet resulted in an expanding field of gaming studies. Very few research projects provide an overview or an understanding of the meaning, place and role that online games occupy in young people's leisure.

Likewise the identity experiments of young people, their playful explorations of the self in relation to the other, and their strategies of self-presentation and self-disclosure on the Internet, have hardly been studied.

Very few studies provide an understanding of the parent-child or the teacher-child dynamics in relation to the Internet. Intergenerational research projects focusing on both the children's and their educators' (parents or teachers) perspective on the Internet, remain scarce.

Observational research designs, to find out how the online competencies of young Internet users are revealed in their concrete online practices and experiences, have not been set up so far in Belgian research projects.

Hardly any research has been done on social networking and peer-to-peer communities among youngsters on the Internet.

The risks and opportunities for learning and education (e.g. informal learning, plagiarism) remain for the most part a theoretical research topic. Little evidence can be found in Belgium about how school work, school performances and teacher-children relations are shaped and affected by the Internet.

Bulgaria

Overview of national research

Internet safety for children is a new topic on the national agenda, which has been tackled in more depth only in the last year. The most complete study was conducted in April 2006 within the project "The Child on the net", the aim of which was to study the risks for children when they communicate via the Internet. It resulted in a big awareness-raising media campaign.

Main features of national regulation

There is no specific national law dealing with harmful content and related Internet issues. The only relevant piece of legislation is The Law on Electronic Document and Electronic Signature from 2001. However, in the Penal Code there is a chapter on child pornography and child pornography on the Internet. The punishment for this crime has been increased recently. National legislation, according to the National Council for Safer Internet is at the same level as that in other EU countries.

National research status

So far the research conducted on the use of the Internet and other online communications by children in Bulgaria is insufficient. This is a new topic which has been tackled in more depth only in the last year. Some partial data can be found within broader studies of the use of communication channels by the population (e.g. the Alpha Research Study, the Vitosha Research Study) and in National Statistical Institute publications.

The most recent and most complete study is that of the National Center for Studies of Public Opinion (NCIOM) conducted in April 2006 within the project "The Child on the Net", the aim of which was to study the risks for children when they communicate via the Internet. The Study is a joint initiative of the State Agency for Child Protection (SACP), the "Partners" Foundation and the British Embassy, funded by the latter. The topics researched were frequency of use of the Internet, reasons for using the Internet, accessibility (home, school, etc.), chat rooms and chat partners, follow-ups to sharing Internet/chat experience, and the dangers and threats during online communication. The report was presented in the national and local mass media in many publications with citations. The report was presented in the networks of the main NGOs and was much discussed in many web blogs of parents, teachers and the general public. The biggest children- and youth-related web sites have included a new section for safe Internet rules and advice. The report was cited also in computer and technical magazines.

The quantitative study, using the method of semi-standardised interviews, encompassed 800 5th to 11th grade students in five Bulgarian towns. The students were interviewed at school and in the cyber-clubs. Apart from this, there was an online inquiry in which 1688 respondents participated, 590 of whom were aged 12-17. The study also included focus group discussions with owners and system administrators of cyber-clubs, Internet providers, teachers and parents of children aged 12-17.

Going back in time, we found another study by the same agency, probably commissioned by the State Agency for Child Protection, conducted in 2003. The subjects of the study were students aged 12-18, and their parents and teachers.

The survey was carried out in 21 secondary schools in five of the biggest cities in Bulgaria, including the capital. The study concluded that the students face a very high risk in their work on the Internet but that they are not aware of this. There is very little, or no, parental control and the students do not discuss their Internet-related threats or problems with adults (parents or teachers).

The topics researched were Internet attitudes and associations, Internet behaviour, risk, dangers and threats from the Internet, and responsibilities concerning students' work on the Internet.

The study was run in the autumn of 2003. The questionnaires were filled in by 770 students, 611 parents and 295 teachers. The study was representative at the national level of schools with regular (permanent) Internet subscriptions.



The third piece of research identified had a slightly different focus: the gender difference in attitudes towards, and use of, the Internet and the new information technologies among children. It was conducted in 2002 by the GERT team and involved 200 children, aged 15-18. This research also looked at the differences between larger towns and villages

Czech Republic

Overview of national research

Empirical research on children's use of the Internet and new media in the Czech Republic is still relatively underdeveloped, both in academia and in other institutions and research bodies. Six studies could have been included in the repository - five of them quantitative, focusing mainly on descriptions of Internet access and online activities, and one qualitative. Only two studies dealt specifically with issues of risks connected with children's use of the Internet.

Main features of national regulation

In the Czech Republic, the issues of harmful content and the protection of children on the Internet, are regulated by the general Criminal Code several articles of which specify what kind of behaviour is illegal (racial/ethnic/religious group defamation, subordination of minors to sexual trade, distribution of materials endangering public morals, etc.).

National research status

In the Czech Republic, empirical research in the field of children's use of the Internet and new media is rather scarce. Up to the end of 2006, only a handful of studies (6) which fulfilled the criteria for standard scientific research had been conducted, which results in a considerable shortage of information on the way children and teenagers in the Czech Republic access and use online media and technologies. This shortage of research can be partially explained by the novelty of this topic in the country, where the arrival of Internet technology was, in comparison with most West European countries, rather delayed and its diffusion among the population significantly slowed by the relatively high costs of personal computers, as well as those of Internet access and operation. These only began to drop after 1999 when the state's monopoly on telecommunications was broken, opening doors for competition in this area and leading to the exponential growth of Internet penetration into households (up to the current level of around 30%). The other reason for the lack of studies could probably be ascribed to the still underdeveloped field of media and communication research in the Czech Republic, represented by only three academic workplaces engaged on research of this kind (two of which had existed for less than 10 years). The academic marginalisation of this type of research is further deepened by a constant lack of funding from the national funding bodies, which usually give priority to more established academic fields. There are also no research institutes outside of university structures which have shown a long-standing interest in this particular topic (most of the surveys conducted by private research agencies were focused on adults), and there seems to be no prospect of funding from the telecommunication industry either.

The available research consists of six studies, four of them stemming from the academic workplace, one conducted by a private research agency and one by a non-governmental organisation. The bleak state of academic research in the field of children and new media is markedly demonstrated by the fact that all of the four studies mentioned were undertaken by just one academic institution – the Department of Psychology in the Faculty of Social Studies, Masaryk University. Of these four studies, three are part of an international longitudinal research project called the World Internet Project (<http://www.digitalcenter.org>) which, through



the above mentioned department, the Czech Republic has been part of since 2003. Within the framework of this project, national quantitative surveys incorporating common questionnaire items are carried out annually, which enables international comparison. Funding for the Czech part of the project is provided by the Ministry of Education. The project, however, ends in 2007, leaving open the question of its possible successor.

Of the two remaining studies, one was organised by the Czech Safer Internet Combined Node (CZESICON), a Czech national carrier of the EU-wide project Safer Internet, and funded by the EU and the Czech Ministry of Education. Conducted by a Polish research agency, Gemius, which carried out the same study in Poland, it enabled the easy comparison of data from both countries. The final study which is included in the repository was designed purely for marketing purposes and conducted by the marketing agency Median.

Concerning the target group of these studies, only the last two of those mentioned above were focused specifically on children (12-17 years old in the study conducted by Gemius and 7-14 years old in the Median study). The three studies conducted as part of the World Internet Project were of a more or less broader scope, involving, in two cases, the entire population aged 12+ (which still provides valuable information about the teenagers aged 12-18), or high school students aged 12-20 (thereby slightly exceeding the age limit for children defined for the purposes of the EU Kids Online project). The remaining study focused on both teenagers and adolescents (12-25 years old). This was also the only qualitative study in the collection (16 people in the sample), while the rest were of quantitative designs, four of which were representative at the national level (with sample sizes reaching 681 to 1702 respondents). The only quantitative study which did not satisfy the criteria of representativity was the one conducted as part of the Czech Safer Internet project, because the surveys were distributed online, which means that the sample (1545 children aged 12-17, 1852 parents of children aged 12-17) was not constructed on probability grounds. The standardised survey, with the exception of the one qualitative study (using non-standardised interviews), was also the dominant method of data collection in the studies conducted in the Czech Republic.

The five quantitative studies were mostly descriptive in character, focusing primarily on issues related to Internet usage, online access, competencies and types of online activity, and eventually on the psycho-social characteristics of the users. The three studies carried out within the World Internet Project also tried to analyse the relationship between the Internet use and social behaviour of the respondents (the size of the social networks they were part of, the intensity of social communication online versus offline, and ways of starting relationships), including questions about possible gender and status differences. The risks associated with access to online technologies were only examined by two of the six studies (33%); in one of them, the topic of risks was only a side issue (questioning high school students about their online contacts with "strangers", as well as their attitudes towards excessive Internet advertisement), while the other – the Czech Safer Internet Study – was directly aimed at exploring the possible risks related to Internet usage (such as contact with strangers or giving out personal information), as well as children's and parents' awareness of these risks. This was also the only study which took into account both children and their parents, trying to explore the possible discrepancies between reality, parents' knowledge of Internet risks and their children's online activities.

The only qualitative study was concerned with issues of identity games on the Internet among teenagers and adolescents; it also explored their motives and strategies for social networking and civic (or political) participation.

Most of the Czech studies included in the repository are accessible online in some form. The only one that is not is the Median research project, conducted as a marketing study with the aim of selling its results to potential clients. The study organised by the Czech Safer Internet team is fully accessible on the project's web site (www.saferInternet.cz). The results of the three surveys undertaken as part of the World Internet Project appear in various Czech, as



well as international, academic materials; however, excerpts from them are also posted, in a more popularised form, on several Czech Internet portals which focus on issues related to digital technologies, Internet penetration, consumption and regulation.

Looking at the structure of research about children's use of the Internet and new media in the Czech Republic, it is clear that some areas are covered more (and better) than others. Obviously, the main insufficiency is the low overall number of empirical studies conducted in this field, which makes it more difficult to summarise the state of the country's research as well as to compare it with other countries.

Concerning current research, it can be said that the focus up to now has been on quantitative studies, which are of a broad scope (mostly nationwide) but quite shallow in research perspective. The information harvested from the surveys is without any doubt relevant and important; however, more in-depth studies are needed in order to help us understand how children approach online media (are they merely passive consumers, or active creators, of online content and the world of the Internet in general?), how they understand them (are they able to distinguish between the real world and cyber-space?), what role do online technologies play in their everyday lives, etc. Therefore, along with continuing (and, hopefully, expanding) quantitative research, a more subtle, qualitative (possibly ethnographic) approach is needed. This is unlikely to be possible without the extension of research into other academic disciplines – first of all, communication studies, sociology, and social anthropology which, elsewhere in the world, are the prime carriers of this kind of research; however, in the Czech Republic, the terrain has been explored only by psychologists so far.

The other visible gap in current research concerns the issue of Internet risks for children. As was described above, only one study on this topic was conducted. It is therefore important that future research incorporates these issues as well, focusing also on the problems of encountering violence, or sexual or racist material on the Internet, or the problem of cyber-bullying, harassment or cyber-stalking, which have so far been neglected, although they are hardly absent in the reality of Czech cyber-space.

Denmark

Overview of national research

Research in Denmark on children, young people and online media has generally focused on access, uses, meaning and social changes and, to some degree, on learning. The overview, however, is incomplete – more studies in various research areas remain to be registered and described.

Main features of national regulation

EU legislation is followed but the ministries which are responsible for one or more areas in this connection (the Ministries of Culture, Education, and Science and Technology) have various areas of focus and are aware of some of the problems that need to be studied further and areas where more/other legislation/other initiatives may be needed.

National research status

First of all, the 16 projects reported to be in the repository (NB: I/others have reported 16 Danish projects or projects including Denmark, but only 9 – 6 Danish and 3 multinational – are so far in the database) do not represent the total picture – more projects need to be identified and reported, partly from individual projects across Denmark, and partly projects



carried out by NGOs and other organisations, or by working groups in Ministries. This national report gives a superficial picture of the most accessible projects conducted within the past 6-8 years, but more are out there.

An overview of the projects reported at this point indicates that they were primarily carried out within media or learning/pedagogical studies. This demonstrates which disciplines and research areas have focused on media development, uses and effects – in comparison to many other countries the media have primarily been studied within the humanities and pedagogy – and, in the past few years within IT studies of various kinds – that is, media studies are not very prominent within sociology. This picture may be changing somewhat as the notion of the broad integration and impact of (digital) media becomes stronger in research areas that so far have not focused on the media. We now tend to see more cross-disciplinary studies – either in cooperation between institutions/areas or by drawing on the various approaches and methods within an individual research institution/project.

12 of the 16 reported projects are Danish, and 4 have more participant countries. These 4 projects are the various SAFT projects plus EuroBarometer. The information below deals primarily with the national projects.

The multinational projects were funded by the EC plus local, partly commercial, funding.

Eleven of the 12 Danish projects were publicly funded, that is by either research councils and/or government, ministries, university research. The remaining study was privately funded by an organisation supported by 17 church organisations for children and young people.

During the past few years the basic principles for the public funding of research projects in Denmark has changed from their being, to a large degree, fully publicly funded, with only a very small number receiving private/NGO funding. And research has been carried out as part of the research obligation for academic staff at universities. Now, however, it has become the norm that research programmes and projects are only partly publicly funded, and that the rest must be found internally from research institutions or by external cooperation, e.g. with other organisations and institutions or with business companies. It is expected that, in a few years' time, the list of funding sources will be more mixed and combined and will contain more references to external, commercial funding.

The target group for 7 of the projects was children – that is, in 3 cases the studies included informants above the age of 19. Two of the projects studied children and teachers, one focused on children and parents, one on children, teachers and parents, and one on teachers. There is a rather strong tradition of studying children and their cultures and social environments in their own right, but it is obvious that most of the 5 studies that included adults were conducted within the area of pedagogy or learning, and that the multi-country projects did also include parents.

Seven of the 12 Danish projects combined qualitative and quantitative research methods. Some of these were not representative of the population but were of the group. Apart from one project, however, in which the quantitative part was rather limited, the size of the surveys was large or very large in order to facilitate descriptions and analysis of patterns of use and effects. In the multinational projects the studies may support statistical accounts but, in the Danish projects, the surveys are primarily used for counting, that is as a basis for the understanding of patterns and diversities between and behind variables/differences. It is interesting that so many projects combine methods – and not only do they combine surveys and qualitative interviews, but the qualitative methods – also used in the 5 projects which use only qualitative methods – are very varied and sometimes experimental. Interviews are combined with observation, creative experiments, high school essays, drawings, testing, discussions, etc. Some of the surveys are combined with the logging of uses. This points towards the idea that the problems being focused upon must be approached from various departure points; that there is a notion of the weaknesses and strengths of the individual



methods; that there is an interest in testing various methods for various problems; and that there is a growing interest in cross-disciplinary research.

The size of the qualitative studies varies substantially from 7 interviews (supporting a survey of 1035 individuals) to 48 (supporting a survey of 363). Obviously, the uses of the interviews, observations and other methods and how they are combined vary greatly.

All the studies study children ranging in age from 6 to 24. Six of the projects cover a broad age group, capturing children aged from 6 or 7 to 16-18 or older. The other 6 projects focus on more limited age groups, one on those aged 7-14, and the others on teens from 12/13-16, 15-18, and 15-24 years old. It seems that the research interests – at least in these reported projects – regard children and adolescents as a broad group or primarily as teens. This seems to mirror the public and political focus on teens and their everyday lives – problems and potentials. Studies of digital media in Denmark have focused very little on the youngest children (below the age of 6), and less on children (aged 6-12) than on teens – unless we are talking about comprehensive studies of children between the ages of 6 and 18. In other research areas studies on children have been more prominent.

Generally the projects deal with access and uses of digital media. Specific foci on risk factors are more prominent in the multi-country (SAFT, Eurobarometer) than in the Danish projects. This may mirror the fact that there is a stronger interest in this area internationally than in Denmark and that the EC promotes projects with this focus. But it cannot be concluded that there is no interest in studying risk factors in Denmark. Some of the NGOs and other institutions, the projects of which have not yet been reported in the data repository, do in fact have a stronger focus on risk areas. So do some of the initiatives of the relevant Ministries and the Danish Media Council. But, in academic research, risk is primarily studied in a broader context such as access, uses, learning, skills for using online media, effects regarding social relations, gender issues, creative experience, etc.

Three of the projects report that they do (also) focus on exposure to harmful and illegal content, while 6 (including these 3) report having studied effects – within various contexts. These studies do also focus on the various aspects of formal and informal learning. The remaining 6 studies are broader media, sociological and cultural studies of the uses and meanings of digital media in the everyday lives of children and young people. Some focus on a broad variety of media, some on one or a few, such as the Internet, mobile phones or online games. The 3 projects which include teachers in the target group, and the 2 studies which include parents, analyse the skills and attitudes of adults as either professionals or parents.

Apart from the multinational projects which are reported in English and partly in Danish, and which have online reports available, the pattern of accessible reports/publications is very scattered. Some of the projects are reported in multiple articles, book chapters and conference proceedings in both English and Danish. Some are only reported in a few Danish reports. Eight of the 12 are reported in both Danish and English, but only one has an online report available in English, and one has online reports in both Danish and English – so the project reports which are available are to be found primarily in print publications. The repositories provide numerous references in most of these cases. One study is reported only in English. The datasets from 6 projects are available, but only in Danish.

It appears that all the projects are reported both qualitatively (in academic articles and books, and conference papers), and broadly (available reports and popular articles). It is also obvious that there is some notion of the need to publish research in English, that is to make it available outside Denmark. There is growing attention, within the relevant research areas in Denmark (other areas of research have been aware of this for many decades), to the fact that it is useful to publish in English as well as in Danish, perhaps because of the growing cross-national level of cooperation – in actual research programmes and projects but also between individual researchers and research institutions in research networks. The growing awareness of the global – or at least international/European – transcendence of media cultures, the



diffusion of technologies – and of cultural diversities – is growing, because it is also becoming increasingly important to compare national/local access/uses/cultures/effects/background conditions to what is going on in Europe or on a global scale. It seems that this development continues – but also with a stronger focus on particular studies of specific national conditions. There is still a need for publications in Danish, since research within the relevant areas is useful and important to many areas outside academia and other research environments - that is learning, teaching, health care, social care, culture institutions, etc.

As regards gaps, it is obvious that there are no studies represented in the reported projects which focus primarily on risk issues with regard to the online media uses of children and young people. The interpretation of what this means, however, may not be that it is not important or to the fore in Denmark, but more an indication of the fact that it is preferable to study risks in broader contexts, and not as isolated phenomena. Another area which seems to be less represented than in other countries is studies of young children – those in pre-school and first grade. It will probably be easier to give a more accurate picture of the strongly and less strongly represented areas in Danish research within this field when more projects have been reported and when the work of analysing and comparing national data has proceeded further in the EU Kids Online project.

Estonia

Overview of national research

It is remarkable that there are rather a lot of studies related to Internet use in Estonia; however, it is regrettable that none of the studies currently available, except for MEDIAPPRO, focus specifically on children's safety online.

Main features of national regulation

In Estonia there is no national regulation related to the protection of children online.

National research status

By the end of 2006, we managed to find a number of studies concerning the use of computers and the Internet in Estonia. Except for MEDIAPPRO, multiple countries were not involved in any of them. The fieldwork for the studies had been carried out between 2000 and 2006. None of the studies had a publicly available dataset. Most of them had a report and press releases online. Most reports were available only in Estonian; however, a number of press releases, summaries, scientific articles and one doctoral dissertation were published in English.

By February 15, 2007 we had coded 10 studies. Five of the studies were funded by research foundations, two by the national government and, in the cases of three studies, it was impossible to identify a source of funding.

Four of the studies focused specifically on children. They are: "A Child and Social Environment", "Children of Screen and Monitor", "Factors of Drill Program Efficiency", and "Civic Culture of Youngsters in Changing Environment". One study ("Awareness and Info-channels of Youngsters") focused, beside children, on youngsters in the age range 18-26. There were three studies ("Tiger Under Magnifier", "Usage of Instructional Software in Estonian Comprehensive Schools" and "Info-communication Technologies and School Culture in Estonia") where the target group was school children and teachers. In the two remaining studies ("Overview of HIV/AIDS Communication, Obstacles and Possibilities to



Regulate it Better”, and “Me. The World. The Media”) the target group was the general population – children were just one part of the population examined.

Three of the studies are classified as qualitative, five as quantitative, and the two remaining have features of both qualitative and quantitative research. In respect of two of the studies (“Overview of HIV/AIDS Communication, Obstacles and Possibilities to Regulate it Better” and “A Child and Social Environment”) the sample size was not indicated. The study “Me. The World. The Media”, that focused on the general population, was carried out in 2003 and in 2005. The total sample sizes were 1470 and 1475 and the number of children (age group 15-19) was 135 and 151, respectively. The study “Tiger Under Magnifier” was also carried out twice (in 2000 and in 2004); the first time the number of children examined was 2731, the second 2088. In respect of the other studies the sample sizes (number of children examined) were as follows: 1131, 204, 36, 1864, 600, and 5842. The age of the children was not specified in the study “Overview of HIV/AIDS Communication, Obstacles and Possibilities to Regulate it Better”. Four studies in which the fieldwork was carried out in schools had specified what grade the children were in, instead of their ages; this information, however, makes it possible to be suspicious about the approximate age of the children examined. When summarising all the coded studies the ages of the children examined are between 8 and 19 (in addition, the TNS Emor E-track survey includes children aged 6 to 7). So the studies cover schoolchildren of all ages.

In five of the studies, computer and/or Internet use is only one of the topics examined, while the other five concentrate entirely on this topic - each from a slightly different perspective. Studies in which Internet use is one of the topics examined are: “A Child and Social Environment”, “Overview of HIV/AIDS Communication, Obstacles and Possibilities to Regulate it Better”, “Civic Culture of Youngsters in Changing Environment”, “Awareness and Info-channels of Youngsters”, and “Me. The World. The Media”. The study “A Child and Social Environment” mainly focuses on examining the social life of children and explores the use of the Internet/computer by children as one of the ways of spending free time. The study “Overview of HIV/AIDS Communication, Obstacles and Possibilities to Regulate It Better” examines such topics as awareness of HIV/AIDS campaigns (including Internet campaigns), the role of different media (including the Internet) in HIV/AIDS prevention work, and the kinds of sources (including the Internet) of information concerning HIV/AIDS. The study “Civic Culture of Youngsters in Changing Environment” examines the impact of Internet use on the civic culture of the children. The study “Awareness and Info-channels of Youngsters” looks at the Internet as one of the information channels for youngsters searching for information. Finally, the study “Me. The World. The Media” examines people’s lives, including use of the Internet, and their attitudes towards the Internet and the related risks and dangers. Studies that focus on the topic of Internet use are: “Tiger Under Magnifier”, “Usage of Instructional Software in Estonian Comprehensive Schools”, “Factors of Drill Program Efficiency”, “Info-communication Technologies and School Culture in Estonia”, and “Children of Screen and Monitor”. All of these studies were carried out in schools and mainly focus on the Internet/computer as a study aid. The studies “Tiger Under Magnifier”, “Usage of Instructional Software in Estonian Comprehensive Schools” and “Info-communication Technologies and School Culture in Estonia” studied teachers as well in order to see how competent and ready they were to use the Internet/computer in teaching.

In summary, the studies available concentrated mostly on topics related to computer and/or Internet use and access, learning by using computers and/or the Internet, skills in using computers and/or the Internet, and the role of the Internet in searching for information and communication with other people. The study “Children of Screen and Monitor” focused also, beside these topics, on those of advertising on the Internet and downloading. Except for MEDIAPPRO, none of the studies focused directly on the risks of Internet use, or examined issues of the regulation of online technologies or topics related to parents. These are the areas in online-related research in Estonia that should be addressed more thoroughly in the future.

France

Overview of national research

In France, there have been very few empirical studies specifically focused on children's online practices. A little but growing body of research is produced by various public and private entities. Most of the approaches come either from the sociology of ICT uses or educational science. Children's safety and parental control have so far received very little attention.

Main features of national regulation

In contrast with some other countries, no institution is widely recognised as the unique actor dedicated to the protection of children's access to media content. The two main institutions are the CSA (Committee for the Surveillance of the Audiovisual sector), particularly active on the labelling of broadcasted audiovisual material (especially movies) and the ARCEP (telecom regulation agency). Child protection relating to on-line access is a part of its responsibilities, but its actions mostly focus on market regulation (such as pricing or economic competition). However, family associations and consumers associations are particularly active on matters of parental control (such as the usability and efficiency of internet filters). For the last two years, these associations have had a growing influence on the public debate about the risks of ICTs for children.

National research status

In France, very few studies concerning children's access and uses have been conducted since 2000. Risk issues have seen even less interest from researchers, either from academics or from the surveys of statistics institutes. This lack of empirical research greatly contrasts with the growing interest in the issue of risks (children's access to online porn, contacts with possible pedophiles, publication of intimate information over the Internet, etc) receives from parents, media, policy makers and Internet providers.

Most of the studies in the data repository focus on children or teenagers and the Internet. However some other studies, not necessarily targeting children, are to be added, for instance studies on the use of the Internet within families. Several studies concern not only the Internet but also other technologies, such as mobile phones. The most large scale quantitative surveys cover the adult population, though they include teenagers, often from the age of 15.

Research funding is rather heterogeneous, coming from State agencies (ANR, Ministry of Culture, Ministry of Education, etc.) on the one hand, and from commercial companies in the telecom and media sector on the other hand. Actors producing empirical studies are diverse too. In addition to academia, research is also undertaken by survey institutes, audience measurement consultants (Médiamétrie), and social research units within private companies. Multiple countries projects are mainly funded by the EC, sometimes combined with State funding (e.g. Ministry of Education). Some surveys, including those conducted by audience measurement consultants, are sold.

A wide range of methods are used, both qualitative and quantitative: in-depth interviews, ethnographic observations, questionnaires, server-centric or user-centric digital data. Recently, new methodologies relying on automated data analysis (such as the mapping of social networks from blogrolls) have started being used to look at teenagers' uses and activities (e.g. in order to investigate teenagers' online social networks). In the studies examined, the methodological details and sampling methods are usually reported.



Most of the quantitative studies aim at giving basic information on access and level of use and their scope is either national or international (e.g. Eurobarometer, Mediapro). The studies focusing on children and teenagers appear to be mainly international, this population being often only a part of the sample in national surveys. Some academic studies are based solely on quantitative data, relying mainly on questionnaires, but there are more qualitative or mixed researches. These studies, often deeply rooted in sociological approaches, often combine several qualitative methods, such as in-depth interviews, ethnographic or participant observations, children's online productions analysis, or user-centric digital data analysis.

However, apart from surveys that are national in coverage and mainly undertaken by survey institutes, it seems that the greatest proportion of academic research on children and teenagers going online is qualitative or combines qualitative and quantitative approaches.

National based quantitative surveys have for a long time paid little attention to teenagers and children. Many surveys deal with a population from the age of 15 up. Though children's uses are still not investigated by these surveys, teenagers seem to be more often within their scope (e.g. a survey from Mediamétrie on the uses of internet in France takes into account teenagers above 11). However, younger children seem to be absent from all the surveys that can be found in France.

Some qualitative studies draw their sample of participants from secondary school pupils (called "collège" and going from 11 to 14) or high school pupils (from 15 to 18). No qualitative work dealing with primary school pupils (from 6 to 10) has been reported so far.

Basically, children's online access and uses are mainly investigated by two academic disciplines: sociology and education. There are very few empirical contributions from other fields, like psychology or language. This gap in research on children's use of ICT reveals a more general lack of interest in children within academic studies.

In the sociological field, many studies come from the sociology of media and the sociology of family. They use mainly qualitative approaches, based on in-depth interviews, sometimes combined with ethnographic observations (and more rarely complemented by quantitative analysis). In all the studies that include observation of use as a method, "real-life" situations are preferred to experimental situations.

In education research, most studies focus on ICTs' integration into the school system, and the consequences for its organization, finance and teacher training. Only a few empirical research deal with pupils' uses.

Due to the lack of national quantitative surveys exclusively focused on children and younger teenagers and presenting representative data, the overview of Internet access, online uses and activities of these populations can be mainly found in the national part of international surveys.

For a long time, sociologists paid very little attention to children and teenagers. This question was left to psychologists. Most of the empirical studies of youngsters actually focused on young adults. A shift is presently happening: sociologists' interest in pre-teens is rising. Over the course of the last few years (especially the two last years), some studies have investigated subjects such as children's cultural practices or socialisation processes. These studies in turn led to a few more specific studies, often involving both academic researches and the laboratories of commercial companies, dealing with children's use of mobile phones, chat, instant messaging or blogs. These studies are not aimed at providing an overview of children's access and uses, but are rooted in a more theoretical point of view. They aim at understanding to what extent ICT may or may not change the way children keep in touch with relatives and friends.



Sociological studies focus on the role of ICTs in the process of young people becoming more independent ('autonomization'), especially on the role peer relationships and identity construction. Other studies, emerging from sociology of the family, examine the distribution of skills among the family members and how these skills can be a resource in the emancipation process of children and teenagers. When including quantitative analysis, these sociological studies do not aim at drawing a representative picture of uses, but rather they aim to analyse differences among the population being investigated, and examine correlations between some key factors (such as ease of access, level of parental skills, etc) and uses. Some studies investigated the link between the level of social, economic and cultural resources of children and the forms of risk awareness and parental control.

Education studies are mainly interested in pupils' skills, with a range of methodologies going from observations and interviews to paper and pencil surveys. Predictably, their approach is more influenced by psychology and cognitive theories than by sociology. They may either focus on what is learned at school, or on the evaluation of the skills that are seen as needed for the proper use of ICTs and the Internet. Even in studies dealing with children's uses, risks and opportunities are more often discussed from the school system's point of view than from children's point of view.

Quantitative studies, when conducted by survey institutes or government related institutions, are in most cases available online. Academics doing a research funded by a commercial company may produce both internal, unavailable reports and academic journal articles or books. Most studies arising from academic research are published as books or journal articles, mainly in French.

As regards gaps, the risk issues have been far less investigated than the opportunities, the latter formulated in terms of self construction, emancipation from parental control or the extension of children's online social capital. The only report primarily dealing with the protection of children on the Internet, requested by several state administrations, Internet users' associations and economics actors (such as Internet Service Providers) is not an empirically based study. It only makes recommendations, one of the main ones being precisely the need for empirical studies on that subject.

The most important gap in quantitative surveys could lie in the absence of any age distinction when reporting online uses and access. First, as noted above, children under the age of 11, in the best case, and often 15, are not taken into account in national surveys. Second, surveys usually give results for teenagers from 12 to 17 (INSEE), 12 to 18 (Mediapro) 15 to 19 (INSEE), or even 15 to 30 (CREDOC). These results do not allow readers to draw comparisons among different groups of young people, in order to determine access and usage evolve as children are growing older. However, this issue is addressed by qualitative sociological studies, though they cannot pretend to be representative.

No research has been published on children's access to on-line services with mobile terminals. But researchers, institutions and the general public show a rising interest in that topic (in line with security issues such as the geolocalisation of children).

Online or offline gaming has received very little interest from researchers, despite the growing success of these leisure activities, and the ongoing public debate about the problems that may result (dependency, lack of attention, epilepsy, etc).

The sociology of youth, although a rather active field in France, does not show particular interest in children's use of ICTs. Until recently, sociological research on youngsters concentrated on teens (as opposed to pre-13-year-old children).

The four national studies in the repository provide a preliminary overview, concentrating on the diffusion of ICTs and a sociological analyses of usage. Other studies have to be added, and the disciplinary scope extended to education science.

Germany

Overview of national research

The German research of children and online media is based on several studies (most are quantitative, commercial studies), which focus on access, usage and online activities. There is marginal empirical information about online risks and/or contact with problematic contents.

Main features of national regulation

In 2003, the *Interstate Treaty on the Protection of Minors in the Media* was reformed to simplify the regulation system to strengthen the *regulated self regulation*. The main modification was the constitution of the *Commission for the Protection of Minors in Electronic Media* (KJM, *Kommission für Jugendmedienschutz*).

National research status

The German research report is based – up to this point – on 24 studies entered in the EUKidsOnline data repository. Most of these studies are commercial studies which are based on quantitative methods. They are often funded by (online) companies like AOL, *Electronic Arts* or *Daimler Chrysler*, commercial broadcasters like *SuperRTL*, publishers like the *Egmont Ehapa Verlag* or the *Bauer Verlag*, which have media products for adolescents like the successful magazine *BRAVO*, or by public-private partnerships like *Initiative D21*, etc.

There are only a few independent, academic studies, which are financed by e.g. federal funds (e.g. the *Federal Ministry for the Family, Seniors, Women and Youth*, BMFSFJ or the *Federal Statistical Office*), media authorities or public broadcasters. Most of these studies provide quantitative empirical data; only a couple of studies apply qualitative methods (e.g. Feil, Decker, Gieger 2004). The focus lies either on children between six and 13 years old or on adolescents from 14 to 19 years old; some consider the whole population from 14 to 49 years and/or older, while studies with preschool-children (under six years) are an exception (ibid.). The majority of the studies focus on access, use and online activities, whereas online risks are noticeably less investigated and seem to be – up to now – of less importance.

Due to the fact that the studies are based on different methods (predominantly quantitative), instruments (e.g. different scales and items), samples (e.g. children in general, PC-users or Internet users, different age ranges, etc.) and concepts (e.g. the definition of “onliner” as a casual Internet user or as a person who used the Internet in the last four weeks), the data from the present studies are difficult to compare and, in some cases, unsurprisingly contradictory. Another crucial fact is that the Internet is generally treated as one homogenous medium without taking into consideration that it contains several different services like the World Wide Web, email, chat rooms, instant messenger, etc. There are only a few studies that consider these services (see, for example, KIM and JIM).

The German study inventory contains several studies which provide general data regarding the online access and use of the German population from the age of 14-year old adolescents. These broad studies provide useful information about the range of the Internet, but no further information about detailed online use, especially that of children and adolescents. In the following, the report concentrates on those studies that offer relevant information regarding children, online use, risks and safety.

The two most relevant and representative datasets are provided by the Media Educational Research Association Southwest (*Medienpädagogischer Forschungsverbund Südwest*): one



study concentrates on children and media, computers and the Internet (KIM), the other focuses on teenagers, information and (multi)media (JIM). The studies have been conducted annually since 1998.

Some open questions and/or gaps concerning children and online media can be identified within German research:

- How do children under five years old use online media?
As mentioned above, there is only a small amount of information about the role of online media in the life of preschool children. We know that there are already many special websites for this target group, but we know almost nothing about their online activities.
- What influence does the Internet have on media socialisation?
Up until now there have been no studies which investigated the impact of new media technologies on the socialisation process in general and media socialisation in particular. Therefore, longitudinal studies are needed. The KIM and JIM study provide important data about access and use over a time span of many years, but the different media offerings have to be taken into consideration, as well as the development of media literacy of children who are part of the generation which is sometimes called 'digital natives'.
- How do children adopt the Internet?
Most studies focus on access, use and activities without asking what children really do when they are online, how they use specific online possibilities and how they deal with contents as well as with personal/virtual contacts. The few qualitative studies state that their perception and therefore adoption of online media are completely different from adults. Thus qualitative research is particularly needed.
- What do children define as "online risks"? and How do children handle online problems and risks?
The above-mentioned qualitative studies state that children have a completely different definition and understanding of risks, but there are no studies which deal with the definition and perception of risks from a child's perspective. As well as that, there is hardly any information about how children deal with risks. Therefore, qualitative research in combination with observation methods is needed.
- How do parents and other adults deal with the online use of their children?
The current studies which investigate the perspective of parents indicate a gap between the older and the younger generation. While parents think they know what their children are doing online, it becomes obvious that most of them do not know what their children do with the computer and/or the Internet, what websites they use and prefer and whether they have already had negative experiences and how they dealt with them.

Less empirical data are available on the perspective of teachers and educators, on how online media are implemented in schools, on how they deal with online risks, and whether they have concepts to improve media literacy, etc. There is already quite a lot of material for teachers which focuses on online media and potential risks, but there are no empirical data on whether this information is used and if it is successful.

Greece

Overview of national research

The study of the relationship between children and/or young people and online technologies in Greece is still seriously under-developed, considering that in January 2007 only a handful



of research papers and surveys from 2000¹ onwards were identified. The 28 pieces of research cover a variety of thematic axes, not all of which pertain directly to safety threats and risks for children and adolescents.

Main features of national regulation

Apart from the general provisions of Law 2472/1977, which protects personal data, the Greek Constitution and the Greek Penal Code safeguarding one's personality from insults, protecting the privacy of communications, as well as transactions of any kind (including digital ones), specialised provisions are now in place in order to regulate electronic communication. These are:

- Law 3471/2006, which implements the 2002/58 EU guideline, and refers to the protection of personal data and of one's privacy when it comes to electronic communication.
- Article 348 of the Penal Code, which forbids the facilitation of debauchery of others as well as the facilitation of lecherous behaviour by any means, be it via a classified advertisement, a telephone conversation, an electronic message, or an image. Perpetrators face fines and imprisonment.
- Article 348a of the Penal Code which is about the protection of minors by forbidding child pornography of any kind - pornographic being any material, visual or not, which intends to stimulate sexual drive.
- Articles 370 and 370b and 370c of the Penal Code, offering protection from hackers, whereby state, scientific and business secrets are protected.
- Police Units persecuting Electronic Crime were established in 2004 by Presidential Decree (P.D 100/2004). The statistics offered report that, from 2001 to 2006, 50 cases of child pornography were disclosed in Greece, 119 people were charged and 93 were arrested.
- The body responsible for the Protection of Privacy in Communications (ΑΔΑΕ) activated P.D. 47/2005, which regulates communication privacy and the conditions under which this is rebuked.
- The Greek Police Units persecuting Electronic Crime are in active collaboration with Interpol, Europol, Public Prosecutors, and various hotlines in a mutual effort to combat electronic crime.

National research status

The study of the relationship between children and/or young people and online technologies in Greece is still seriously under-developed, considering that in January 2007 only a handful of research papers and surveys from 2000² onwards were identified. The 28 pieces of research cover a variety of thematic axes, not all of which pertain directly to safety threats and risks for children and adolescents.

More specifically, research is found on:

- the use of computers by students in secondary education; gender breakdown, patterns and location of use were also examined.
- results from schools across Greece based on eEurope indicators in the country; this survey studied, *inter alia*, the use of computers and the Internet by students and teachers in Greek schools, and the Internet penetration rate. It was interesting to note that it was the teachers who estimated the main reasons why students use computers.

¹ The decision was made to collect research data only from 2000 and onwards

² The decision was made to collect research data only from 2000 and onwards

- six-monthly reports on broadband penetration and the development rate in the country; the reports also presented Internet penetration in EU households, the penetration rate for broadband in GR and EU-25, fast Internet for students in Greece, and the Greek Broadband Development Plan.
- comparison of eEurope indicators between Greece and the EU. Here the position of Greece in relation to EU-15 and EU-25 was provided vis-à-vis Internet access at home and at work; broadband access at home and at work; e-commerce; e-government; e-learning; e-health.
- the identity of Internet users in Greece. The main research focus in this survey was the profile of Internet, PC and mobile phone users in Greece according to the variables of gender, age, proximity to urban areas, educational level and regional development; the reasons for using the above technologies were also examined on the basis of the same variables, as well as the location from which various groups access the Internet. Comparisons with EU-25 were also made.
- national surveys on new technologies and the information society, where once again the demographic profile of PCs, Internet and mobile phone users is examined, as is location and frequency of use, time spent using, the impact of new technologies at work and on everyday life, and the importance of computer and Internet skills for learning. Reasons for not using the Internet constitute an interesting research angle, and so does the comparison between Greeks and immigrants regarding possession and use of PCs, the Internet and mobiles. There are also surveys which shed light on the domestic use of ICTs (PCs, the Internet, mobiles, TVs, digital and subscription channels), on frequency of use according to gender and region, on computer use according to education and occupation, and on reasons for not buying online. Additionally, the regional use of PCs and the Internet is examined, along with patterns of teleworking and e-commerce, reasons for not accessing the Internet from home, and the type of ICT used to go online.
- trust and safety in a fast network environment. Here safety threats in e-banking, e-commerce, e-business and e-ticketing in a broadband environment are discussed, as is surveillance and regulatory bodies governing electronic crime, encryption, digital signatures, and the protection of personal information.
- child users of the Internet, where the focus is on the location and frequency of children's Internet access, unsupervised access, reasons for going online, reception of spamming, online purchasing, and experiences of being approached by someone whilst online. This study was conducted by the children themselves, hence there are reasons to doubt its methodological and theoretical findings.
- patterns of Internet use by young people, offering insight into reasons for using the Internet, gendered use, frequency and location of use, awareness of safety risks that emanate from using the Internet either via PCs or mobiles. Unfortunately, the details of this study are not known since only a press release is publicly available. Its findings are seriously called into question.
- the way young people in Greece (and in three other countries) manage chat room relationships, their fears, the precautions they take when giving out personal information, their offline meetings with people encountered online. This study also looks into gender differences in online experiences, young people's experiences when exposed to harmful and offensive content, parents' regulation of their children's use, and parents' awareness of children's online risks.
- the home computer in children's everyday life, where the degree of children's access to home computers is examined, along with their familiarisation with the PC, their computer activities, gender differences in online experiences and their parents' competencies.
- studies on early childhood teachers' attitudes towards computers and ICTs, based on their years of previous service, use of PCs at home, in-service training, experience with PCs, and their views on the introduction of computers in early childhood education.
- policies for content filtering in educational networks. This is a theoretical study on the risks in Internet content in school networks in various countries. It also presents

- Acceptable Use Policies for the Greek School Network, and discusses the effectiveness of filters, contact with strangers, cyber-bullying, hacking and gambling.
- the culture of the Internet and the way in which the mass media in Greece frame and shape public anxieties about the Internet.
 - the informational literacy of young schoolchildren, where computer access and use at school level is discussed, along with the children's online skills and activities.
 - safe surfing for kids, a conference presentation about the policy implemented by the Greek School Network.
 - new technologies and old fears at school – a book in Greek discussing the introduction of new technologies in Greek schools.
 - a presentation on electronic crime in Greece from the Unit of Electronic Crime of the Greek Police, giving background information on what constitutes electronic crime according to Greek legislature; operations to apprehend electronic criminals; statistics on child pornography, and so on.
 - conference papers on young people and how they use the Internet at school; on NTs and their role in the Greek curriculum.

The majority of studies available are single-country; only one of them is in fact part of a wider European project where other countries are scrutinised, although the article itself reports on the Greek part of the initial project. In another journal article, the authors report on and evaluate risks in the school networks of Australia, Canada, the USA and the EU. Only five studies (representing academic papers) are written in English, with the rest of the work available in Greek only. Having said that, there is one conference paper which offers a short summary in English.

Only eight studies actually focus on children as a target group, making the national population the most frequent group studied. Most studies on offer so far involve older children, i.e. from the ages of 11-12 or 15-19; there is only one study which deals with the experiences of children as young as six while, in another one, five year-olds are interviewed on a limited number of the research questions.

In terms of quantitative-qualitative, 14 studies are quantitative, one is qualitative and two works are theoretical. Studies also exist (conference papers, presentations, a **book**, a doctoral thesis) which are not publicly accessible; therefore, their exact methodology, funding bodies and research focus cannot be determined. Most of the quantitative studies use structured questionnaires along with interviews (either over the phone or face to face). In addition, there are ten larger scale studies (i.e. national surveys), most of which use representative samples of the general population, and four sub-national studies, using non-representative samples.

The national surveys are co-funded by the European Union and the Greek government; for the majority, the bodies responsible are either (a) the Observatory for the Greek Information Society (www.observatory.gr) which, in some cases, may subcontract the surveys to the Greek Network for Research and Technology (GRNET, a public body, www.grnet.gr) or to a commercial company, or (b) the National Statistical Service of Greece (www.statistics.gr). The academic papers (ten) do not mention funding explicitly, apart from one which is, in fact, part of a wider multi-country EU project. The research for these papers was most probably conducted with departmental money along with the recruitment of student assistance. In another case, a conference presentation rather than a research paper, the author reports on the policy for safe surfing suggested and followed by the Greek School Network, and various techniques of content control. Funding for this kind of work originates from the Greek School Network, hence the Ministry of Education. Elsewhere, the presentation material on e-crime in Greece is clearly the result of forensic research conducted by the Electronic Crime Unit of the Greek Police, thus representing public expenditure.



As far as the disciplines involved are concerned, this can only be applied to the academic studies – since the other surveys represent government bodies – which come from departments such as early childhood education, computer engineering and informatics, applied informatics (although the researcher in charge was a professor of sociology), Institute of Computer Technology, psychology, and communication studies. Since the majority of the studies found come from an educational/pedagogic or informatics background, and very few tackle the social impact of online technologies, it appears that the field of Internet safety from a sociological point of view is still in its infancy.

This is also evident when we look at which topics received more research attention in relation to others. The majority of the surveys (co-funded by the EU and governmental bodies) shed light on the demographic profile of NT users, hence all kinds of information can be extracted on the relationship between gender, age, educational level, proximity to urban areas, socio-economic class and other demographic variables, and patterns of use of, and access to, new technologies; the safe use of online technologies and related risks or concerns are addressed only on a piecemeal basis. Insofar as academic research is concerned, attention has been drawn to the study of the relationship between teachers and ICTs; on how NTs can be best incorporated into the school curriculum, on policy issues regarding Acceptable Internet Use at School networks, on young people's use of the Internet at school, and the information literacy of young children. Reports on electronic crime and the Greek School Network originate from a special Unit of the Greek Police and the Greek School Network and are not taken into account when evaluating academic research.

All the above help accumulate a body of relevant research; however, the bottom line remains that the issue of the safety of the Internet and online technologies in Greece has only recently been attracting consistent research attention.

Many surveys (the entire text) are available online, while almost all of the academic research papers are published in journals and are also available electronically. In addition, there are a few conference papers which can be made available on request.

Iceland

Overview of national research

Research on children and online safety has been carried out to a very limited extent in Iceland. A very notable exception to this is the fact that Iceland has participated in surveys carried out in connection with the Safer Internet Action Plan. Other than this, information on children's use of the Internet and possible online risks is to be found in surveys with a more general media use perspective or as the by-product of surveys aimed at other issues but where online use has been measured. Research based on qualitative methods is virtually non-existent in Iceland.

Main features of national regulation

The national legislation is similar to that of the Scandinavian countries.

National research status

Information on children and issues of online use and safety in Iceland can basically be obtained from three research projects. All of these are quantitative and based on representative samples for the respective age groups.

The first of these, and the most comprehensive, is research carried out in connection with the Safer Internet Action Plan or SAFT project. During the last few years SAFT Iceland has collected data on children and adolescents and their use of mobile phones, net-ethics, net-education, source criticism, Internet, online and console gaming. Currently SAFT is conducting, in collaboration with Capacent/Gallup, a national survey of parents and school-children on the same topics. The Ministry of Education, Capacent/Gallup, Iceland Telecom, Vodafone, Microsoft Iceland, and Post and Telecommunications are among those who have been involved with the SAFT surveys.

The second is Children and Television in Iceland. This is a long-term research project which dates back to 1968 and has been repeated at six year intervals since 1979 in three communities in Iceland. Since 1997 these surveys have included several questions on the Internet and children's use of computers. The strength of this particular project is that it enables time-series comparisons, as well as rather extensive possibilities for comparison with the use of other media. The main limitations of the project is that it has a general focus on media use rather than on online use in particular.

The third is a group of surveys carried out in Iceland as part of the transnational research projects focused on children's health and well-being in general. An example of this is the 2006 HBSC survey in Iceland carried out as part of WHO's Health Behaviour in School Aged Children. This survey contained questions on the use of computers and game consoles as well as Internet usage. The strength of these surveys is that they enable cross-country comparisons and, in the case of Iceland, they are not administered to a sample, but to the whole population, of school children. This enables very powerful data analysis. The main limitation of these surveys, however, is that they contain very limited information about children's online behaviour.

Research on children and online media has mainly been studied within the field of sociology. This can partly be linked to the fact that media and communications studies are taught within the Department of Sociology at the University of Iceland.

As mentioned before, research on children and online media in Iceland has had a very general focus, with research questions concentrating on time used and access. The exceptions are the SAFT studies which, in addition to access and time used, have focused on net-ethics, net-education, source criticism, and Internet, online and console gaming.

A main gap in the research on children and online media in Iceland is simply the lack of such research in general, with notable exceptions, however, such as the SAFT project. Currently SAFT is preparing a research project and survey on children's online use and gaming and safety issues, particularly in relation to user patterns and online identity, in collaboration with the Ministry of Finance, Microsoft Iceland, Morgunbladid and Capacent/Gallup. However, no research institute within the social sciences has been focusing on children and online media and, as the research community in Iceland is only as big as you would expect in a nation of little more than 300,000 inhabitants, no media researcher has made children's online use her primary research focus.

Norway

Overview of national research

Despite the high diffusion of new media available in Norwegian homes, there is strikingly little research on children's use of new media in Norway. Mainly the research focus has been on how children from 9 to 16 years old use new media and the possible risks. Only a few studies with a high quality academic approach exist; the majority of the studies have just mapped risks and media use behaviour among children, rather than focusing on why and how certain risks develop.

Main features of national regulation

The focus on national regulation has not been on providing children with filter technologies, but rather on providing children and their parents with digital competence so that they are able to regulate themselves. Digital competence is now also part of the new school reform "Kunnskapsløftet" in Norway.

National research status

Norway has a considerable diffusion of new media technologies in comparison with many other Western countries, and is therefore a particularly interesting location for research on risk issues in children's safe use of the Internet and new media. Despite this, there is striking little research on this topic in Norway.

The qualitative research projects are mainly in-depth interviews with children from the age of 10 to 16 years old. The focus has been on how children communicate and experience communications in new media such as chat rooms and mobile phones (Kaare et al, in press; Tingstad, 2003), or how they use the Internet in terms of exposure to illegal and harmful content, contact with strangers and cyber-bullying (Taran & Bjørnstad, 2001). A new study, Cyber-ethics, a published report of which does not yet exist, is about young people's perception of ethical aspects of the usage of new media communication. One study has also investigated email correspondence and observed chat rooms used by children aged 11 to 14 (Tingstad, 2003). Experiences of heavy Internet users have also been investigated (Kaare, 2004).

The quantitative studies have focused on patterns of media use, types of media access and use, and how this differs across age groups and gender. The most well known study, SAFT - Safety, Awareness, Facts and Tools - is a cross-European project that aims to promote safe use of the Internet among children and young people. SAFT wants to teach children and teenagers how to reduce 'risk' behaviour and be responsible Internet users. SAFT also works to empower parents, educators and the Internet industry to help children reach this goal.

The SAFT project in Norway has completed two nationally representative surveys (2003-2006) on children's (9-16 years) use of the Internet, mobile phones and computer games, safe use and risk behaviour, and attitudes and knowledge regarding digital competence. SAFT has also carried out two surveys (2003-2006) mapping out parental knowledge of children's use of the Internet, mobile phones and computer games, user patterns and risk behaviour in all risk-related fields, and parental attitudes, mediation, fears and strategies. They reveal a startling set of interesting discrepancies, not only between different children, and over time but, most noticeably, between children and adults.

SAFT (2005) has also particularly looked into the use of camera-phones, surveying children's use of mobile phones, awareness-raising, responding to illegal content on mobile devices, use of mobile phones in general, and MMS in particular, among youth aged 8-19+.



A second study is the project “A Digital Childhood” (2002-2004) that included a survey conducted on children from seven to twelve years of age in Oslo and the surrounding rural districts (Heim et al., in press; Brandtzæg et al., 2005; Endestad et al.). This project has generated knowledge of the uses and experiences of a variety of new media technologies among children at both individual and group levels. The main focus was not on risks, but rather on how different types of media use link to children’s psychosocial factors. It found that children engage with different kind of media activities, and some of these are significantly related to psychosocial factors.

A third study, CITIZEN MEDIA, looked at the distribution of patterns of media use in different countries (so far Austria, Germany, Spain and Norway), by analysing statistical data from Eurostat about current ICT usage in households and by individuals. The focus is not just on children, but on the whole population; neither is it on risk behaviour online, but on patterns of media use and how different user trends develop in a cross-cultural perspective (Heim & Brandtzæg, 2007).

A fourth study has focused on the ease of access to sexual, violent and hateful commercial content on the World Wide Web via common search engines, and on the authenticity and rationale of content (Skjultstad, Norwegian Board of Film Classification report 1/2000).

A research project entitled “Protection and Access: To Regulate Young People’s Internet Use” (Wold) is in progress. The focus of the survey is the regulation of children and youngsters’ Internet use in public schools and libraries, focusing on the dilemma regarding freedom to information and regulation.

In general only a few academic research projects on the topic of risk, children and media exist, and there are just a few publications in journals reflecting national research on children’s use of media in Norway. Most studies are documented online, as short summaries or reports; some are just available in Norwegian. One main reason for this is that the Norwegian Research Council does not have a specific research programme addressing these kinds of research questions. The funding possibilities for doing more in-depth academic research on this topic have been small.

Furthermore, the focus of the studies so far has been on mapping and quantifying children’s risks online, rather than on investigating how and why young people exhibit risky behaviour in the online environment. There is also a lack of research regarding children’s risks in online multi-player games and in social user generated applications. Future research should be more qualitative in terms of interviews, logging and observations, to achieve more in-depth knowledge about how children actually experience and reflect upon the Internet and its possible risks.

Poland

Overview of national research

In Poland, it is highly necessary to educate children, parents and teachers about using the Internet.

Main features of national regulation

There is a regulation project which is waiting to be discussed and voted upon in the Polish parliament. It will regulate the field of Internet use, including questions of safety.

National research status

Two types of research exist: research on children aged 11-18 and research on the general population. All of them are single-country studies, funded by the national government or NGOs/Non-Profit organisations. Only one research project was based on a representative group - the others are more qualitative. The sample size was between 500 and 10,000 children, and the average age of the children studied was 13-15.

The main research topics are Internet security, and paedophilia on the Web. Studies are mostly available offline in paper publications, although summaries (mostly in Polish) can be found online.

The first study, 'Research on risky behaviours of Polish children on the Internet', was executed through web interception surveys set up on web sites using the free site-centric audit provided by stat.pl / PBI. The analysis covered two target groups: Internet users aged 12-17, and people aged 18+. Furthermore, amongst the respondents aged 18+, parents of children aged 12-17 were isolated. Surveys were set up at random between 11th and 12th January 2006. The survey covered 1,779 Internet users aged 12-17, 3,768 respondents aged 18+, and 204 parents of children aged 12-17, all of whom filled out the survey in its entirety.

The second research project, 'Paedophilia and Pornography on the Internet: Threats to Children. POLAND 2003'. The survey was conducted by Łukasz Wojtasik within the Nobody's Children Foundation's research programme. The sample consisted of 8,991 children - 1,180 boys (13%) and 7,763 girls (87%) - aged 12-17. The questionnaire was available for 5 months, from 10 December, 2002 to 10 April, 2003, at selected websites for children and adolescents. The research was financed by UNICEF and supported by the following websites: BRAVO /WWW.bravo.pl/, Centrum Edukacji Obywatelskiej /www.ceo.org.pl/, DZIECI BEST /www.dzieci.best.pl/, INTERIA /www.interia.pl/ - one of the main Polish web portals

Apart from measuring basic usage of chat rooms and IM (Instant Messenger), the survey focused on Internet, such as refusing to give strangers personal details or any other information that might disclose the child's identity, as well as refusing to meet strangers outside the Internet. The children were asked if they had heard about threats associated with ignoring these rules. Then they were asked if they had actually given a stranger their phone number, given a stranger their home address, personally met a stranger "known" to them from the Internet, been enticed into unwanted sexual conversations and, if yes, if the children had felt frightened/scared about this situation. They were also asked whether they inadvertently encountered pornographic materials on the Web, received links to pornographic websites in email messages and, if yes, whether those who had received links to pornographic websites had used them.

Portugal

Overview of national research

- Studies focus on Portuguese children and young people.
- A significant amount of the fieldwork dates corresponds to school-years, as the researchers opted to conduct the studies in schools.
- Mostly non-funded PhD/MPhil research, mostly not available online.
- The theoretical framework came mostly from Education. Other disciplines include Sociology, Sociology of Youth, Sociology of Childhood, and Marketing.



- Predominance of research focusing on the uses of new technologies, particularly the Internet, in educational contexts. Some attention has also been devoted to online interaction and social networking.
- Absence of risk related research.

Main features of national regulation

Portuguese legislation on new technologies has existed since 1985, regulating issues of safety, copyright, e-commerce, etc., contemplating the protection of citizens (children, young people and adults) and may not differ from other EU countries as it is based on European policies. In 2005, the government launched a Technological Plan, with 112 measures oriented at upgrading the Portuguese technological gap in the European context. Within these measures, regulatory procedures for increasing safety on the Internet have not been considered.

The main regulatory agency is ICP-ANACOM (National Authority for Communications) which disseminates and monitors the norms regulating safety and e-commerce, telecommunications operators, and all issues concerning telecommunication networks. Nonetheless, the monitoring seems to have little public and media visibility and it might be argued that the actions implemented have little relevancy and efficiency.

The Provedoria de Justiça de Portugal (Ombudsman) is concerned with the use of mobile phones and worked closely with several ministerial offices, ICP-ANACOM, and telecommunication operators in October 2005 to promote a campaign for children's safe use of the mobile phone, oriented at promoting awareness of Internet benefits and risks³. To this date the legislation includes some of the previous points but no concrete measures have been taken following the *Provedor's* intervention.

National research status

Portugal has a total of 10 studies in the data repository, all focusing on children and young people. The studies are all written in Portuguese, concern only the Portuguese population, and are marked by a predominance of non-representative and sub-national samples. There is an absence of multi-country collaborations, excepting Mediappro. Mostly the research focuses on pre-teens and teenagers (from 9 to 16 years old), although there are studies with younger (4 to 9) and older (17+) populations.

All the research has been conducted in the last seven years (the earliest entry being 1999 and the latest 2006).

Some of the research was sponsored by national research foundations such as *FCT* (Fundação para a Ciência e a Tecnologia), but mostly the work results from non-funded MPhil research (which might explain the choice of research settings; a significant amount of the research was carried out by researchers who work in schools and have, thus, easier access to such spaces).

A significant amount of the fieldwork dates correspond to school-years, as the researchers opted to conduct the study in schools; sometimes the researchers were teachers with easy access to the institutions' students. Regarding research methods, the tendency was to combine qualitative and quantitative methods, namely observation and surveys

³ Benefits (parental monitoring of children's whereabouts and children's feeling of safety – several risks were identified, such as abusive text messages, bullying, unintended expenses); Risks (parents unawareness of children's mobile phone usage; children's easy access to inappropriate and potentially illegal contents; exposition to chat and date lines; vulnerability to marketing, both while surfing the Internet and using mobile phones; loss of privacy)



(questionnaires). When researchers used their own schools for field work, which seems to be usual, their double role as researchers and teachers may have affected the results.

One study concentrates on the use of the Internet by kindergarten children; this has educational purposes and looks at 5 year-olds' usage of children's websites and at the development of collaborative learning through classroom interaction (Cruz, 2004). We did not collect other studies focused on classroom activities at other levels of schooling, since EU KIDS ONLINE focuses mostly on informal uses of the Internet by young children. From schools, we collected research analysing the availability of the new technologies at school, students' user behaviour in informal places such as libraries, and the importance of the Internet as an organisational solution (Viseu, 2003); students' and teachers' perceptions of the educational values of computer games and the Internet, as well as the availability and use of the Internet at home and at school (Pinto, 2003).

Online interaction and social networking was approached from a variety of angles. Barra (2004), for instance, under the approach of Sociology of Childhood, uses ethnography to understand how children (4 to 9 years-old) explore the Internet in small groups; the research assesses the kinds of sites explored, the ways in which time and access is negotiated, and children's views on user aims, and sites' contents.

More focused on Cultural Anthropology, the Internet as a performing space is the subject approached by Justiça (2002), who tries to understand in which ways the Internet is used for leisure, in particular through the creation of fictional bodies and characters. Silva (2005) analyses the structural and organisational differences between groups of young people both in real and virtual communities.

From the Sociology of Youth, in his PhD thesis, Simões (2006) researches the use of the Internet as a space for cultural production and political participation, through the analysis of hip-hop cultural production and consumption (subjects ranging from 15 to 35 years old); the author uses non-participant observation of forums and chat rooms; interviews conducted online; and qualitative analysis of a database containing a sample of 120 sites, weblogs and photologs.

From Sociology, Ferreira (2004) evaluates young people's access, perceptions and knowledge of the Internet in a context of exclusion propitiated by a peripheral geographic location, in order to provide a basis for the improvement of local politics in relation to innovation, knowledge, new technologies and young people.

Also from Sociology, CIES-ISCTE (Centre of Investigation and Studies in Sociology) together with Portugal Telecom conducted the following study: "Children and Youth: their relation with technology and media". Using this study, they intended to characterise Portuguese young people's media use and access, as well as the contexts in which these occur. Two other main objectives are the identification of their media preferences and usage of the Internet. To achieve such aims, they conducted an online survey at www.sapo.pt. 1353 valid answers were registered.

From a Marketing business perspective, Dutschke's MPhil (2004) considers children as the new consumers and defines the Internet as the 'supermarket' of the future. Facing the increase of a net generation, able to do everything on the Internet, big companies must redefine strategies to face new consumers' demands. We included this study due to its particularly optimistic market-oriented perspective.

There is a predominance of research focusing on the uses of new technologies, particularly the Internet, in educational contexts. Some attention has also been devoted to online interaction and social networking but, again, the school emerges as a privileged space for the observation and analysis of such practices.



Broadly, the studies looked at the following issues:

- The WWW's integration into kindergarten activities;
- Uses of the Internet and computer games at school;
- Children's online interaction and social networking;
- Children's online skills and Internet usage;
- The Internet as a tool to overcome exclusion in peripheral regions;
- Youth cultures (the use of the Internet as a space for cultural production and political participation);
- Children as consumers, and the Internet as a communication channel to sell products and services.

We encountered mostly non-published Masters theses, the results of which, however, might have been published in national journals. Occasionally the full report is available online or published as a book.

We found that researchers rely on the survey and participant observation (not always well documented, and seldom did we find the researcher doing an exercise of reflexivity on his/her role as an adult wanting to participate in children's activities), and do not adopt discourse oriented research techniques. Also, there is a gap in research on informal spaces - as mentioned above, the research conducted at schools predominates.

In terms of topics studied, the Portuguese Proforma reveals an absence of risk related subjects, possibly due to the complexities of such a field of research (studies investigating risk behaviours may involve long-term participant observation, difficult to achieve in the context of an MPhil thesis). It also presents no relevant data concerning gender, parental mediation and different socio-economic contexts.

A considerable amount of the projects were carried out by researchers who are teachers (high school, pre-school); this might result from the fact that, until recently, graduate courses were crucial to their career progression.

The field of education is the most significant as it has also been one of the traditional areas of university research on IT. From the mid 80s there have been national projects related to the educational use of new technologies, particularly focusing on curriculum activities in the classroom. Schools have thus been the subject of a great deal of intervention from university researchers from IT to Educational Psychology.

Nonetheless, there is no real strategy for media education in schools. Concerning the Internet, up until 2004, schools had been equipped and it was expected that they would just start using the technology. The SeguraNet programme, which began in 2004, integrated into the Safer Internet, was the first to be developed in Portugal aiming to raise awareness of the challenges and uses of the Internet. It based at the Ministry of Education (CRIE) and involved four Universities and their Competence Centres. These produced leaflets, posters, and guidelines for use, among other material, that became freely accessible on the project's website and in public spaces such as libraries and youth centres. The campaign had a preventive character emphasising risk ("what not to do..."), and recent assessment of its outcomes showed that it did not prevent risk behaviour particularly in older children.

This critical evaluation of the SeguraNet programme contributed to a different approach designed in the Awareness Node Plan (led by UMIC, with CRIE participating). This new approach aims to involve many more students as active monitors and promoters of "good practices" among their colleagues, working in teams with a teacher.

Another gap exists between parental and teachers' approaches and concerns. While families value technology in general and trust their uses of it, teachers are more sensitive to



discourses of risk, which is translated into the reduced use of IT in the classroom, including fewer awareness activities for safer social networking, relying on students' critical usage. In turn, students see safety as a mostly technical issue, displaying concerns with virus protection.

We should stress the absence of studies from Social Psychology, and Communication and Media Studies in our first data collection. In particular, academic research within Communication and Media Studies in Portugal has been strongly influenced by the essay model, sometimes without an empirical dimension. This has to do with the French influence in the main Communication Departments.

Empirical research in Communication and Media Studies has not paid enough attention to audiences, compared with that paid to content analysis or even the production context. Media Departments that pay special attention to ICT have explained the absence of research on children's uses as being because they put an emphasis on professional practices.

Until recently Media and Communication research involving children was almost non-existent. Researchers interested in studying children's practices and cultures, or in media representations of children and young people or other associated issues, have difficulty in the implementation of programmes of study and modules regarding the subject in their faculties and departments.

This panorama is now slowly changing, and there are on-going academic studies on the uses of mobile phones and video games by young people. We believe that in the next few months three or four other studies from Media and Communication may be included in the data repository. Our participation in this project, and its results, will be a good argument for promoting more attention within the field of Media Studies.

Besides Education, Sociology is the field in which the most projects have been conducted, following the tradition of quantitative and qualitative research undertaken by research centres whose scientific values have been recognised by FCT. Although scarce, there are signs that more research on children and young people will emerge in this field. The current presidency of the Communication Observatory (OBERCOM) by a sociologist who is particularly concerned with such studies will certainly have a positive impact.

Public entities are likely to produce the first representative results in the near future. UMIC, along with National Institute of Statistics, is conducting a study on access and uses of the Internet by the general population. However, the study does not pay particular attention to young people (for instance, considering 10-15 year olds as one group). We are awaiting these results in the next few months, and we hope that they will provide us with useful information on socio-economic and geographic variables.

Also, the entity that regulates communication (ERC - Entidade Reguladora da Comunicação) has commissioned the first representative piece of research on media audiences in Portugal, including child audiences. A multidisciplinary team of sociologists and communication researchers has crepeated a methodology previously applied by Livingstone, considering the home as a unit of analysis (involving parents and children), and looking at online activities.

UMIC's vice-president, in a meeting to discuss the Safer Internet Day in which the EU Kids Online Portuguese team participated, s suggested that FCT should promote a Special Plan for Researching on Children and Technologies, given its relevancy to the country. Although still an intention, it is an initiative that could become prominent due to the impact of the EU Kids Online Project and the consequent call for further research theoretically and methodologically oriented to online practices and uses.

Parental awareness and guidance; school mediations; the social and cultural context of the country and the available discourses and social representations on new technologies



(including those present in official government, educational and media discourses); teachers' knowledge and strategies in dealing with students' plagiarism and non-critical use of Internet contents; and the potentialities and risks of mobile phone usage, are all aspects almost absent from these studies, indicating that further research is needed to gain a deeper understanding of young people's relations with ICT. Further efforts are being made by the team to locate relevant research, although the emerging work seems to follow the trend and approach the subject from an educational/pedagogic perspective.

Slovenia

Overview of national research

Of the 6 national studies outlined below, 4 were conducted with the Centre for Methodology and Informatics, Ljubljana University and all were quantitative studies.

Main features of national regulation

In Slovenia, researchers have to follow the rules on the collection and protection of personal data in elementary education (http://zakonodaja.gov.si/rpsi/r06/predpis_PRAV6096.html), and the Personal Data Protection Act (http://zakonodaja.gov.si/rpsi/r06/predpis_ZAKO3906.html), which means that one needs to acquire the consent of the parents when carrying out research with primary school children. For secondary school children (up to the age of 18), consent is needed if the research takes place during school time.

National research status

In Slovenia, not many studies in the field of children and the Internet have been conducted. We have identified five large-scale quantitative studies on a general population conducted in the framework of the RIS project (Research of Internet in Slovenia, Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Ljubljana), two representative general population Eurobarometer studies, one small-scale student quantitative/qualitative study, one quantitative youth study including such topics, and one online trans-European quantitative study. The studies deal with different topics, i.e. usage of the Internet, parental regulation of children's Internet activities, safety issues, attitudes toward safety issues, etc. The disciplines involved are mainly methodology and informatics.

The Slovenia national studies are as follows:

a) The usage of Information Communication Technologies. The fieldwork was conducted by the Statistical Office of the Republic in Slovenia and Centre for Methodology and Informatics (project RIS – Research on the Internet in Slovenia, Faculty of Social Sciences Ljubljana) in spring 2004 and April 2005. The aim of the study was to gather data on the basis of a standardized EUROSTAT questionnaire for the Statistical Office of the Republic in Slovenia. In April 2005 the sample was probabilistic sample with 2000 units from the Central register of population of the Republic of Slovenia. Surveys were conducted face-to-face in households. The research population was the general Slovenian population, aged 10-74. The number of young people aged from 10-18 in the sample was 232 in 2004 and 150 in 2005. The topics researched were very broad but with respect to security and children the following should be highlighted: security issues on the internet (spam, viruses, personal information abuse), the usage of the internet by children and young people (an overview of activities, such as playing games, sending emails, searching for information, downloading, etc.). In terms of discipline we could classify research as based in Methodological studies and Informatics. The research was funded by the National Government. The report is not available.

b) *RIS- Web activities*. This was conducted in December 2004, in the Centre for Methodology and Informatics). The method used was computer assisted telephone interview. The sample was a probabilistic sample with 2346 people aged 10-75 (the general Slovenian population). The topics researched with respect to security and children were security issues on the internet (privacy, viruses) and children and the internet (inappropriate content on internet, what kind of web sites do children visit). In terms of discipline we could classify research as being based in Methodological studies and Informatics. The research was funded by the National Government. The report is not available.

c) *RIS-Information and communication technologies*. The fieldwork was conducted in April and May 2005 in the Centre for Methodology and Informatics. The method used was computer assisted telephone interview. The sample was probabilistic sample with 2000 units from 10 to 75 (in the general Slovenian population). The topics researched were very broad (mobile phones, social networks, digital divide, lifestyles) but with respect to security and children three topics stand out: children and the internet (limited access for children), Web site visiting (using the mobile phone, PocketPC, laptop) and children and mobile phones. In terms of discipline we could classify the research as being based in Methodological studies and Informatics. The research was funded by the National Government. The report is not available

d) *RIS-DCO 2006*. The fieldwork was conducted in September 2006 in the Centre for Methodology and informatics. The method used was computer assisted telephone interview. The sample was probabilistic sample with 607 (first part) + 605 (second part) people aged from 10-75 (in the general Slovenian population). The topics researched were broad but with respect to security and children the most important topics are usage of internet, internet security and internet abuse questions. In terms of discipline we could classify the research as being based in Methodological studies and Informatics. The research was funded by the National Government. The report is not available

e) *The information and participation needs of young people in Ljubljana and surroundings*. The research was conducted by MISSS (Youth Information and Advice Centre of Slovenia). The fieldwork was conducted in September and October 2004. The sample consisted of 760 young people from 12-17 from the Slovenian capital Ljubljana and its surroundings. The method used was questionnaire filled in by pupils of primary and secondary schools. The topics researched were: information access, information literacy, leisure and participation on the internet. . In terms of discipline we could classify the research as being in Youth Studies. The research was funded by the National Government. The report is available online (in Slovene): http://www.misss.org/files/mladi_porocilo_raziskave.pdf.

f) *STOPline research project*. This is a student research project for STOPline (the Hotline within the Safer Internet Plus Programme) under the supervision of Bojana Lobe and Vasja Vehovar and conducted with an non-probabilistic sample of 299 primary (10-14 years) and secondary (15-19 years) school pupils and students (20+). In addition, three focus groups were conducted on primary (10-14 years) and secondary (15-19 years) school pupils and students (20+) with 7, 9 and 9 participants. The topics researched were: usage of the internet, attitudes towards potentially harmful contents, pedophilia content and attitude towards it, hate speech and attitude towards it, how to report harmful and illegal content on the internet, techniques for increasing awareness of potentially harmful and illegal content on internet, and a comparison of perceptions of danger in real and virtual worlds. In terms of discipline we could classify the research as being based in Methodological studies and Informatics

As regards gaps, studies like SAFT Norway 2006 should be conducted in order to gain a more in-depth insight into topics concerning internet usage and online risks amongst Slovene children and youth. Very little is known about what the children actually do online, how much parents are aware of their online activities and how the rules are set by parents and accepted by children and youth. Do Slovene parents actually sit with the children, as they reported in the latest RIS survey? How much personal information do Slovene children and youth reveal



online, have they got any experience with pedophilia or child pornography? A large-scale national wide quantitative study, supplemented by qualitative study would be needed to get a better picture.

Spain

Overview of national research

National research is mainly concerned with use habits and does not pay much attention to potential risks. Nearly all fieldwork uses quantitative methodology and, although funded by public institutions, lack a connection with any academic discipline.

Main features of national regulation

Although national legislation mainly follows EU legislation, the Government has created some specific regulation concerned with e-commerce and the information society in general, whereby in 2003 Spanish legislation was changed and the possession of pornography involving children became a criminal offence (art.187 and art. 189, Lo 25 November 2003).

National research status

In Spain, over the last six years, a total of six national research projects involving specific fieldwork on minors and the Internet have been carried out.

“Youth and messenger culture” (2005). Population frame: children (over 12) and youth. Paper self-completion survey and qualitative interviews.

www.injuve.mtas.es/injuve/contenidos.item.action?id=90016137&menuId=572069434

“Children: their safety and habits on the Internet” (2002). Population frame: children 10 to 17. Face-to face and online/email survey. Sample size: 4,000.

www.protegeles.com/Internet.doc

“Use and attitudes of youth towards the Internet and mobile phones” (2002). Population frame: 14 to 22 years old. Online/email survey. Sample size: 1,236.

www.ebcenter.org/

“Cyber centres and children’s safety on the Internet” (2002). Population frame: cyber- centre users aged 11 to 17. Face-to face survey. Sample size: 1,000.

www.protegeles.com/cibercentros.asp

“Habits of consumption of television and new communication technologies of children and young people” (2004). Population frame: children’s parents. Paper self-completion survey. Sample size: 875.

www.ceaccu.org/docspdf/sondeohabitosconsumotfnwtecnologias.pdf

“Socio-demographic profile of Internet users. Activities carried out on the Internet” (2005). Population frame: households with children aged 10 and over. Face-to-face survey. Sample size: 3,066 households, 7,045 individuals.

www.red.es

All these studies are available online and all single-country as they concentrate on a Spanish population frame. For the most part, a public institution such as the government, or a particular ministry, has funded nearly all of these studies, although there are two which were



carried out by “Protegeles” – a research association which receives public funding from the Safer Internet Plus Programme - for the Minors’ Ombudsman. There is only one piece of fieldwork funded by a commercial company and supported by a private academic institution.

As far as their main target is concerned, most of them concentrate on the study of minors’ and young people’s behaviour patterns. There is one study that analyses households with children over 10 years of age. The population frame of these studies is between 10 and 14 years of age, and 19 or older. One of the studies interviewed children’s parents instead of asking the children themselves about their own behaviour. All of the research focuses on age –either in terms of individual ages or age groups- and gender differences, and some also try to identify socio-economic differences.

Regarding methodology, there is one study that combines qualitative and quantitative methods, the other five are exclusively “quantitative”. Nearly all of the surveys were conducted either face-to-face or online/by email. Two used paper, self-completion surveys for collecting parents’ and university students’ answers. The “qualitative” methods used in the mixed study combined three different types of interviews: individual interviews for youth aged between 18 and 24, focus groups for those aged 25 to 29, and triangular groups for the youngest group (12 to 18). All of them tried to investigate in depth the different discourses about *messenger culture*.

The size of the samples used in the studies ranges from nearly one thousand (875 questionnaires) to four thousand: several conducted around one thousand interviews, one conducted four thousand, and another studied 3,066 households which means 7,045 individuals altogether.

As far as the disciplines involved are concerned, one of the research projects –the one about *messenger culture*- is sociological and there is a commercial one that studies the potential market for mobile phones and online technologies. But most of them lack a clear connection with any academic discipline; they concentrate on studying children’s and young people’s online habits in order to improve their safety or to analyse the evolution of their habits.

All the research studied topics concerned with Internet use habits, such as access, usage, and interests and activities, whereas strategies for finding things online, learning online, online games, creating content online, social networking online, gender differences in experiences and effects of going online are not so common.

There is not much attention paid to potential risks online. Two of the studies do not pose any questions about risks, whilst three of them each ask two questions on this topic: about misinformation and giving out personal information, contact with strangers and invasion of privacy, encountering sexual/violent/racist/hate material and user-generated content. Only one piece of research conducted for the Minors’ Ombudsman considers risks and includes the following topics: exposure to illegal and harmful or offensive content, contact with strangers, encountering sexual/violent/racist /hate material, giving out personal information, invasion of privacy, cyber- bullying, downloading illegal content, and cyber-stalking or harassment.

As far as the regulation of the use of online technologies’ is concerned, only two studies ask questions about parents’ styles of regulation of children’s use, and only one asks about parents’ knowledge of children’s practices and parents’ media literacy.

There is only one piece of fieldwork that pays attention to parents’ Internet experiences, regarding their competence and attitudes to online technologies.

In sum, there are two main gaps in the Spanish fieldwork on minors and online technologies. The first is related to research content and could be due to a lack of awareness about online risks for children and minors in general. Although three of the six research studies analysed state that they try to promote safety in the use of online technologies, in reality they



concentrate mostly on studying habits, and pose very few questions about potential risks such as illegal or unwanted content, contact with strangers, and cyber- bullying or harassment.

The second gap is a methodological gap. All the projects analysed have a quantitative approach to the main issue, and only one of them combines the survey with some qualitative interviews. As a result, the latter study has a much wider overview of the issue. This is the only piece of research that asks questions about risks, parents' regulation, and parents' Internet experiences as a whole. In the exploratory stage of research, qualitative methodologies have always been more productive than quantitative ones, as they permit the researcher to discover unpredicted behaviour patterns, whilst quantitative studies rarely provide this kind of information. As is the case in the use of online technologies now, behaviour patterns and habits are constantly evolving together with their accompanying risks.

Sweden

Overview of national research

Eighteen research projects/reports on children and the Internet in Sweden were registered for EUKidsOnline during 2006. They had been carried out since 1995, mostly at universities. The projects/reports cover a wide range of topics, although relatively few focus on risks and safety – and those that do are mostly financed by authorities. About half the projects used quantitative methods, and half qualitative methods.

Main features of national regulation

The national regulation follows EU legislation and Swedish law in general (i.e. what is forbidden in society is forbidden online). A special law/prohibition of file sharing was introduced recently.

National research status

Eighteen research projects/reports on children and the Internet in Sweden were registered in the EUKidsOnline repository during 2006. More research/reports have been identified but will be registered during 2007, since the scheduled time for work within this international project during 2006 was finished. The general picture of the research projects/reports below, however, will not change drastically when the rest of the projects/reports are added. (Naturally, nothing can be said of possible new projects during the coming years.)

The fieldwork for the different projects/reports is evenly spread from 1995 to 2006, with a slightly smaller representation from 1995 to 1997.

Most of the projects/reports are executed at universities and university colleges, and of these projects/reports most are also financed by universities, etc., in the form of Ph.D. theses or as university teachers' own research, while a few are financed by national research councils. About half of the university and college research is carried out within the discipline of Media and Communication Studies, about the other half within Pedagogy, Computer Sciences, Ethnogeography and Theology.

Fewer projects/reports are carried out by research institutes and financed by the national or a regional government/ministry/authority or by multiple sources.

One project was financed by the EC, and this is (of the projects/reports registered so far) the only project that also has a comparative approach, run in collaboration with other countries (the so-called SAFT project, Safety, Awareness, Facts and Tools).



About half of the projects/reports used quantitative methods and about half qualitative methods (a few projects/reports used both quantitative and qualitative methods).

About half of the projects/reports focused mainly on children of about 8 to about 15 years of age, and the other half mainly on youth aged 16 and over (and a few projects focused on both children and youth). Three of the projects included adults generally and two projects included parents.

The topics of the research projects/reports are varied and cannot be summarised easily. However, they tend to be associated partly with financing.

Relatively few of the projects deal with risks and safety online. This characterises five (of the hitherto registered) projects/reports – and four of these are financed by the national, or a local, government/ministry, or the EC (while one project is an on-going PhD thesis at university). Two of these projects are also the ones that include parents (i.e. questioning what parents believe their children are doing on the Internet, how parents mediate and control, etc.).

Naturally, many of the topics are partly associated with methods:

The quantitative surveys based on larger samples deal with access to and use of the Internet, and contain detailed questions about what children and/or young people do on the net. Some of these surveys also include adults generally, and consist of repeated measurements of all media use every year (from 1995). There are also surveys extending the topics to other leisure activities, value patterns and backgrounds, thus thoroughly analysing and presenting patterns of different life styles among different Internet users.

The qualitative studies based on smaller groups of young people most often analyse a delimited area in-depth from the young people's perspectives, seeing the young as (active) agents/users/meaning-makers of the Internet in their everyday lives. A few examples of topics are: how children regard email, chat rooms and the Internet as arenas for communication; gender and identity work in an Internet community; young players' styles of self-presentation and identity performances in an online game world; how websites are being used as a resource for seeking knowledge; teenagers' contacts with the bible on their own terms on an ecumenical website; and how the Internet and mobile phones affect the social and geographical patterns of interpersonal contacts.

All reports are public and available (can be received or bought) in print, and half of them are also available online.

The Netherlands

Overview of national research

We feel that the Netherlands is well equipped with especially quantitative data compared to other countries. If any 'gaps' in research exist, we may mention that in the Netherlands there are relatively few qualitative studies, there is hardly any information on kids aged 10 years and younger, social network data are lacking and there are few longitudinal studies.

Main features of national regulation



In the Netherlands European legislation is implemented after careful national consideration. Legislation that is not based on European instructions is limited. To a large extent the Netherlands favours self regulation, and presumably does not range among the European countries with strong regulation.

National research status

The Netherlands is rich in quantitative data but qualitative research is under-represented in the Netherlands. A series of large scale national surveys on the Dutch population present representative data on access to ICTs (especially PCs and the Internet), use of these ICTs, and digital skills, for all age groups. Several national bureaus are involved in gathering and analysing these data. The results are available online, however they are mostly in Dutch. For these data the most important data suppliers are the Central Statistical Office of the Netherlands (CBS), Statistics Netherlands and the Social and Cultural Planning Office. Via the Scientific Statistical Agency, CBS and SCP supply the scientific world with a number of surveys on persons and households. The Scientific Statistical Agency (http://www.dans.knaw.nl/en/data/steinmetz_archief/), is an intermediary institution acting as a go-between for (academic) researchers and Statistics Netherlands. Data from Statistics Netherlands are anonymised by leaving out regional variables, minority group indicators and other identifying characteristics. Annually, Statistics Netherlands collects data on access and use among a very large sample (polls approximately 40,000 respondents). Data on media use from the SCP can be found mainly in the Time Use Survey (TUS), in which how time has been spent since 1975 is observed every five years in approximately 2,000 to 3,000 respondents in each phase. In 2004, the SCP conducted a large survey on ethnic minority groups (LAS) in the 50 largest cities. This survey also included questions on access and use of ICTs and questions related to the integration of these groups through new media. All of these studies are government funded, either directly from the resources of the organisation or with support from Dutch departments.

Other more in depth surveys which are mostly directed at 10-18 year olds present more detailed information on topics like online interests and activities; creating content online; concerns and frustrations when online; online games; social networking online; sexual harassment; friendship formation; effects/consequences of going online (e.g. development of social skills, wellbeing).

Prominent in the Netherlands is a research group centred around Prof. dr. Patti Valkenburg who started a research programme on young people and the use of ICTs based on a 5-year personal grant from the Dutch National Science Foundation. This group mainly consists of communication scholars with a media psychological orientation. They investigate the social consequences of Internet communication for children and adolescents. Since early 2005 they have fielded several correlational and experimental studies. In June 2006 they fielded the first phases of two longitudinal studies, one on the uses and effects of online communication, and one on the uses and effects of sexually explicit online material. So far, they have conducted six surveys on 10-18 year olds. Most studies have sample sizes of between 800 and 1,200 respondents. These data contain detailed information on adolescents' identity experiments on the Internet; Internet communication and its relationship to well-being; social networking sites and their relationship to adolescents' self-esteem and well-being; adolescents' exposure online to sexually explicit material and recreational attitudes toward sex; self-disclosure during instant messaging. Hypothesis formation and testing holds an important place in this research group. The work is published in several high standing English language scientific journals.

The SCP not only conducts large scale general surveys on the Dutch population, so far it has also conducted two in-depth studies on 13-18 year old pupils in secondary education. This work is part of a research programme on ICT and Society that is being carried out by Prof. dr. Jos de Haan. This research is sociological. The two surveys provide information on online access; online usage; online competencies/skills; online interests and activities; social



networking online; the effects/consequences of going online; Internet safety. The data were collected in 66 (in 2001) and 69 (in 2005) schools in the Netherlands, from an average of three classes per school with an average of approximately 21 pupils per class. The schools were located in two large cities, eight smaller towns and four small municipalities. Class-based interviews were used (questionnaires were handed out in the classroom and completed during a lesson). The classes concerned were pre-vocational secondary schools (vmbo) grade 3, senior general secondary schools (havo) grades 3/4, and pre-university schools (vwo) grades 3/4/5. A total of 1,213 pupils in 2001 and 1,561 in 2005 completed questionnaires. In 2001 an interview with an ICT coordinator at each school was added to the data set, asking about ICT facilities at the school, ICT education, the computer skills of teachers and the presence of specialist ICT staff. The questionnaire contained 32 questions on computer skills, divided into six blocks: games (2), word processing (6), drawing (3), email (5), the Internet/WWW (12) and operating systems (4). In 2005 a letter and questionnaire was also sent to one of the parents of each student, of whom 1,080 parents replied. The research population of these studies was comparable so, as a number of the questions from 2001 were repeated in the 2005 study, trends over the 2001-2005 period could be observed. These studies were paid for by the SCP, the 2005 data collection with financial support from the Ministry of Economic Affairs. Results from these studies were published in Dutch language monographs containing extended summaries in English.

In 2001 the Institute for Addiction Research (IVO) started a research programme on compulsive Internet use or, to put it in popular jargon, Internet addiction. In 2005 they published the results from several studies in scientific journals. These studies aimed to develop an instrument for measuring compulsive Internet use; to estimate the prevalence of compulsive Internet use among Dutch youngsters; to compare the potential addictive effects of different Internet functions; and to study the relationship between online communication (chat/MSN) and the psycho-social wellbeing of adolescents. Proformas still need to be added to the repository. Part of the research was funded by Microsoft. At least three surveys were conducted in the period 2003-2005 on adolescents between 13 and 20 years old, two of which by online questionnaire and the other in classic pencil and paper. Two of the surveys are longitudinal.

The use of ICTs in schools has also been the subject of research in the Netherlands by two research organisations, ITS and IVA. It deals not only with the amount of computers and use of these computers in schools, but also with the extent to which schools and teachers use the benefits of ICT for the learning process and sharing of knowledge, for themselves and their pupils. This question is answered by inspecting the results of the Dutch ICT Education Monitor (www.ict-onderwijsmonitor.nl). The results pertain to mainstream primary education, secondary education and adult/vocational education. In the school year 2003–2004, the seventh edition of the ICT Education Monitor was carried out. Teacher and pupil competence in ICT basics is part of this research, as well as capability in the didactic use of ICT in the classroom. This research is funded by the Ministry of Education. Reports in Dutch are available online.

To say that there is no qualitative research at all in the Netherlands would be a mistake. Certainly there is qualitative research on young people who enjoy playing computer games and how a relatively autonomous game culture has arisen with its own norms with respect to, for example, humour and violence. Playing games generates new social relationships and deepens existing ones. Online, young people meet each other as strangers with a shared goal. Offline, they play against each other with video games or as a team against other teams.

Further there is research into the activities of Moroccan youth in online forums and how they discuss important life choices and exchange opinions about Dutch society. In the Dutch debate about integration, Moroccan young people are often the subject of discussion, but their voice is hardly ever heard. In the forums of websites such as Marokko.nl or Maroc.nl they have the opportunity to express themselves and they lead heated debates on current



themes. Opinions about current issues and personal experiences through an exchange of ideas is important in this research. The opinion formation of Moroccan young people is researched by analysing the development of several discussions on different websites.

Most research in the Netherlands comes from (social) psychology, but sociology also holds a strong position in the field. Some of the qualitative work is done by scientists with a background in anthropology.

Topics that received a relatively large amount of attention in the Netherlands are: access to and use of ICTs; the digital divide; digital skills; social networking online; sexual harassment; identity and friendship formation; effects/consequences of going online (e.g. development of social skills, self-esteem, wellbeing).

Some of the studies were available in English language scientific journals, others were published monographs written in Dutch (some of them containing summaries in English).

We feel that the Netherlands is well equipped with data compared to other countries. If anything, in the Netherlands, there are relatively few qualitative studies, there is hardly any information on children aged 10 and younger, social network data are lacking, and there are only a few longitudinal studies.

The United Kingdom

Overview of national research

Since 2000, there have been sufficient UK based research projects to provide a good picture of children's online access, use and activities. Most of this is quantitative, with some qualitative and mixed methods, several studies combine the views of parents and children, and much of the research is readily available online. The challenge will be to keep this picture updated, and to fill the gaps (young children, certain risks, new platforms, etc.).

Main features of national regulation

The 2003 Sexual Offences Act made grooming a child online for sexual purposes illegal. Most legislation used to apply to the Internet predates this technology (e.g. the Obscene Publications Act, laws on inciting racial hatred, etc.), and the Home Office is currently examining whether legislation needs to be reviewed or extended. Generally, the UK favours a self-regulatory approach on the part of industry, combined with an emphasis on individual responsibility (via policies for awareness raising and Internet/media literacy).

National research status

For work published between 2000 and 2007 we found 41 reports in the UK (at this stage). These are all single country studies, but there are also a further 7 multi-country studies that include the UK.

There appears to have been a growing concern about risks to children as regards Internet access and use, with a clear increase in funded research outputs from 2002-5 followed, it seems, by a decline in the last year or so. Key advances include the Home Office's 'Chatwise/Streetwise' report (2000), which summarised research on online risks to children and called for more research, the Economic and Social Research Council's (ESRC) E-Society-funded 'UK Children Go Online project' (2003-5) (1), the first to map access, use,



risks and opportunities using a national survey, and the Home Secretary's Task Force for Child Protection on the Internet, which has mobilised cooperation across child protection, policy, industry and the academy and raised the public profile of Internet safety issues.

Most studies are specifically focused on children, young people and the Internet. However, the data repository also includes some studies that take a wider perspective that includes children and the Internet as one dimension. Some studies cover the Internet as one ICT amongst others. Others deal principally with another technology, but include data on the Internet as well. Last, some studies cover the entire adult population, but include some teenagers as well by defining an age range that begins at 14 or 16 years old.

Most of the projects identified have a single funding source, although there are some cases of joint funding. For example, 'UK Children Go Online' was mainly research council (ESRC) funded, but included collaboration with commercial companies and charities. There have also been some partnerships between child protection charities and commerce: for example, the supermarket Tesco funded a study in which the charity NCH (National Children's Homes) was the lead organisation. Commercial companies and the national research council (ESRC) are most commonly the main funders in these joint collaborations.

For projects with a single funder, the most common sources of funding are the national research council, commercial companies (e.g. MSN, PC World) and charities (e.g. NCH, ChildLine, Banardos, NSPCC) – these accounted for 15 of the studies. The industry regulator, Ofcom, has funded a few studies (e.g. Media Literacy) as have Government departments such as the DfES (Department for Education and Science), for example. Research institutes (e.g. the Trust for the Study of Adolescence) have conducted some research, and there are some partly funded by the media industry in partnership with regulators, involving the BBC and the Broadcasting Standards Commission), trade associations such as the Internet Service Providers' Association and the EC.

In sum, the national research council (ESRC) has been a leading funder for research in this area. There is also a considerable amount of research from commercial bodies and children's charities, more than seems common in other European countries. The establishment of the Home Office Task Force for Child Protection on the Internet, a unique body in Europe, has been useful in linking agencies giving NGOs a stronger lobbying power than in some countries. The resulting visibility of risk issues in particular has contributed to the number of studies that has taken place in this field.

The greatest proportion of studies identified in the UK is quantitative, which is interesting given that qualitative research is a well established and respected methodology in the UK. There are a number of studies combining both approaches and fewer that adopt only a qualitative approach.

Industry and the regulator mainly fund quantitative studies. Quantitative studies funded by the national research council (i.e. academic), government departments and the regulator tended to involve over 1,000 people. A number of the surveys conducted by commercial companies and charities involved a few hundred people. Research that is solely qualitative appears to be chosen when an in-depth examination is required, when the research focus is on very young children, and when the phenomenon is new and so requires an exploratory approach. Combined methods were found across the different types of funder (e.g. commercial companies, public TV and charities, as well as academic studies and ones funded by the regulator).

Most of the surveys conducted are national in coverage, claiming to draw representative samples. In the main, however, these use quota samples rather than random probability samples, with quotas set to match the composition of the population (note that this varies in terms of coverage of the nations that comprise the UK, with Northern Ireland in particular sometimes omitted from the sample). One exception is the Oxford Internet Institute's OxiS



survey, part of the World Internet Project, which used a random probability sample to cover the adult population from 14 years old. At times, it is schools that are sampled, using a random or quota sampling frame. Some surveys do not claim representativeness in the traditional sense: for example, one was an online survey and one was based on calls voluntarily made to the charity.

It is problematic that, for some studies, methodological details are not reported (even, for some, one cannot determine clearly the age range of the children studied).

For the most part, surveys are conducted face-to-face, followed by self-completion, online surveys and one telephone survey.

For the studies that use qualitative methods, again details of methodology are not always provided. Where available, these suggest that approximately half the studies are based on interviews (individual or group), while others use various 'other' methods.

The majority of participants in the research were children themselves, the next most common strategy being to sample parents as informants on their children's Internet access and use. There are a few studies of teachers or other adults. A sizeable number of studies included both parents and children.

The majority of studies deal with children aged between 9 and 16. Thus most research concerns secondary school pupils (which in the UK includes 11-18 year olds), although a few concern primary school pupils (i.e. aged 7-11). This also means that since some studies cut across the primary/secondary school division, the same questions were asked of both younger and older children.

Notably, the repository includes a few studies of even younger children, which is perhaps surprising given that in the academic literature much of the published research concerns teenagers. This pattern may well reflect the fact that the age of first acquiring Internet access/mobile phone/interactive technologies is falling.

The most common academic discipline across the research identified is that of education (e.g. Becta and DfES funded studies). Apart from that, there is a scattering of other disciplines (e.g. media studies, geography), with rather few studies from sociology or psychology. In a number of cases, it was not possible to discern whether the project was framed by a particular academic discipline. And for many, particularly those conducted by market research companies commissioned by child protection and child welfare agencies, or conducted by market research companies themselves (e.g. Childwise and NOP), there appears to be no research framework guiding the study at all. Rather, these studies repeat tried-and-tested questions, or questions that arise from public or policy debates, resulting in a snap-shot of current trends but with less value in terms of generating a longer term understanding of children's relation to the Internet.

The most commonly researched topics are children's Internet access, use, and 'interests and activities'. These are partly considered of interest in their own right, and partly they are collected as background information whatever the focus of the survey.

Both children and parents are asked about basics such as children's usage and sometimes both are asked about parental rules. The next most researched topic is children's skills, concerns and frustrations when online. Overall, this research provides a good, or at least, sufficient, picture of the basics of children's Internet access and use, although of course the picture must be kept updated. There are some studies covering online learning, social networking, creating online content and the general consequences of going online. Only a few studies cover each of the following: children seeking online advice, civic/political participation, strategies for searching for and interpreting online content, online games, gender differences, and identity play online.



Approximately half of the studies identified address online risks. Of these, more concern risks of contact with strangers, giving out personal information, and encountering what we might call 'hostile content'. There are some studies of cyber-bullying, pornography and privacy issues, and just one each on commercial exploitation, misinformation, illegal downloading, hacking, and cyber-stalking. There are as yet no studies of gambling or the use of challenging sites (e.g. pro-anorexia, suicide, etc.). By contrast with the considerable concern about television advertising to children and the commercial exploitation of children, there is little if any empirical research on online advertising/commercial persuasion (although a few reports touch on this, including 'The Good Childhood Enquiry', by the Children's Society, 2006).

The studies initiated by charities (sometimes with commercial partners) tend, understandably, to focus on risks, parental knowledge and concerns, and how the use of the Internet by children is regulated. Interestingly, this is also the focus of many studies by commercial companies. Studies funded by the Government, the regulator, research institutes and the national research council do sometimes consider risks. But most are more orientated to the potentially positive aspects of the Internet (e.g. for learning, creating content, social networking, etc.). These studies are also more likely to consider broader 'effects' of the Internet experience, such as implications for digital divides. These studies almost always collect basic information about such matters as Internet access, usage, skills and interests.

Turning to research on parents, there is a fair amount of research on parents and parent-child interaction. The most common focus is on parents' regulation of children's use of the Internet, with a few studies on parent's knowledge of children's practices online, parents' awareness of risks, children's reactions to regulation, parents' attitudes to and concerns about online technologies, and parents' competencies. There are single studies of parents' media literacy and the effectiveness of filters, although these are especially liable to go out of date quickly.

Possibly as a result of the nature of the research topic (i.e. the Internet), it is most common to find the research report online, this aiding transparency and the accessibility of the research considerably. For most studies funded by the Government, the national research council and the Regulator the reports are online; only about half of the reports relating to studies funded by charities and companies are online.

In several cases, only a summary of the research is available and, especially, methodological details are lacking. This impedes the evaluation of the research methodology and findings. Almost all of these summaries relate to work funded by charities and commercial companies. Academic research is often available as a book, book chapter or academic article and, in these cases, the advantage is that the research has (generally) been peer-reviewed and revised in accordance with academic standards. A few reports could be obtained on request from the authors or funders, usually for work funded by charities and commercial companies. No examples of PhDs or Masters theses were recorded since there was sufficient research material available that these were not sought.

Only one (raw) dataset was accessible online. The lack of available datasets from studies is surprising since the UK, along with the Netherlands, is one of the few European countries that promote the placing of databases online (see the ESRC's Data Archive, now a requirement for all research council-funded data).

The research conducted from the late 1990s until around 2004 has been highly influential in shaping both the research agenda and policy responses. This provides a satisfactory picture of UK children's Internet access and use, and a partial picture of online risks and strategies to manage/reduce these. This picture is now in need of updating in two senses: first, existing research findings need updating since children's access and use has changed and, second, the research questions asked need to be expanded since the opportunities and risks afforded by the Internet have also changed. It is not yet clear how or whether the overall picture will be regularly updated, as there are no dedicated funding opportunities for this area, but it is



noticeable that there have recently been a series of research projects responding to topical concerns – chat rooms, cyber-bullying and, most recently, social networking.

There are as yet no studies of gambling or the use of challenging sites (e.g. pro-anorexia, suicide, etc.). By contrast with the considerable concern about television advertising to children and the commercial exploitation of children, there is little, if any, empirical research on online advertising/commercial persuasion (although a few reports touch on this, including 'The Good Childhood Enquiry', by the Children's Society, 2006).

The research agenda does not wholly address the concerns of policy makers and parents. The reasons for this are not entirely clear, although they may lie partly with the particular concerns of research funders (e.g. child protection agencies have been very concerned with cyber-bullying, but less concerned with illegal downloading or commercial exploitation), partly with the academic agenda (which has been more interested in online opportunities than risks), and they partly follow from the methodological challenge that many risks are relatively rare, thus requiring very large samples to provide reliable population estimates (e.g. of the use of suicide sites, or the incidence of gambling among children). It is also likely that the popular media focus on the risk of paedophile contact, and the recent incidence of happy slapping, and other forms of online and mobile phone related bullying, have led to more research on contact risks than some other risks. Last, policy ambivalence regarding the desirability and practicability of regulating Internet content may impede the funding of research concerning content risks (hate content, violent images, etc.), although there has been some research on children's access to pornographic content.

There is less research that pairs data from parents and children than one would wish, given that such research systematically reveals discrepancies between the accounts that each provides (thus qualifying the reliability of research conducted only on parents, or only on children), possibly for reasons of research expense.